

Spener's *Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church* as the Basis for The Evangelical
Covenant Church's Affirmations

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Abstract
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Phillip Jacob Spener is credited with the beginnings of Pietism with the publishing of his book *Pia Desideria*. In this book, Spener addresses problems within the Lutheran Church, and offers six proposals of rectifying these problems. The intended purpose of this paper is to prove that there is a correlation between Spener's *Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church* written in his *Pia Desideria*, and the Affirmations of the Evangelical Covenant Church. The foundations of Pietism will be explored as well as its movement from Germany to Sweden.

In Sweden, the State controlled the Church, and as a state church, the Swedish Lutheran Church became mechanistic in its worship and scholastic in its theology. As Pietism is brought to this country a new enthusiasm was being generated regarding the study of God's Word by the lay man. Study groups were being formed and the desires not only read but discuss Scripture and the latest sermon. These *collegia pietatis* began spreading despite the efforts of the state church to quench these groups.

As the Swedish Pietists immigrated to America, they brought with them the ideals of personal Bible study and mutual accountability with them; along with this they brought a desire to send missionaries out into the world to preach the Good News. It was this evangelistic desire that contributed to the division from the Lutheran Synods that were established in America.

In 1885, The Swedish Evangelical Mission Church was established as a denomination. Over the last 120 years the Affirmations of the Church were distilled into the six that are currently held. It is the Pietist heritage of the Swedish immigrants that influenced the development of these Affirmations specifically the writings of Spener and his *Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church*. Each Affirmation will be examined in light of Spener's Proposals to prove the correlation of influence.

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Chapter 1

Jacob Spener and German Pietism

Introduction

Philip Jakob Spener's *Pia Desideria* was one of the most influential works of the Pietist movement. Spener's understanding of the issues facing the seventeenth century Lutheran Church provides scope for the issues facing the twenty first century Evangelical Church, including the Evangelical Covenant Church.

From its formation in 1885, the Covenant has held to six Affirmations as the guidelines of the Church: a) centrality of the Word of God, b) the necessity of new birth, c) a commitment to the whole mission of the Church, d) the Church as a fellowship of believers, e) a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit, and f) the reality of freedom in Christ. It is the argument of this paper to prove that the six Affirmations are directly traceable to Spener's "Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church."

To fully understand the full impact of Spener on the Covenant Church, there needs to be an understanding of the historical context in the movement called Pietism and its roots in German Lutheranism and movement into Sweden. A brief sketch of the leaders of this movement beginning with Johann Arndt in sixteenth-century Germany to Carl Olaf Rosenius in nineteenth century Sweden will aid in the understanding of the full impact of the Pietist movement on the Covenant Church.

The Affirmations, which were updated in 2006, continue to reflect the influence of Spener and Pietism. A brief look at the history of Swedes in America and the formation of

the Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant Church and its transition into an American denomination also helps in understanding the correlation between Spener and the modern day Covenant Church.

Jacob Spener and German Pietism

Less than one hundred years after the German monk Martin Luther published his ninety-five theses addressing problems in the Roman Catholic Church, a new controversy was brewing in the Protestant Church. Disagreements on issues began to rise up within the Lutheran Church. Theological concepts of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli were debated within this new Protestant Church including baptism, State involvement and predestination with much disagreement. One of the most hotly debated theological concepts of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli was their differing views of the Lord's Supper. The Lutheran view is that there is a real and substantial presence of Christ in the bread and the wine. Zwingli's view is stated in his *Confession to King Francis*:

We believe that Christ is truly present in the Lord's Supper; yea, that there is no communion without such presence We believe that the true body of Christ is eaten in the communion, not in a gross and carnal manner, but in a sacramental and spiritual manner by the religious, believing and pious heart.¹

Calvin's view, which is between Luther and Zwingli, is best stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith:

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually,

¹Philip Schaff ;David Schley, *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 7:677.

present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are, to the outward senses.²

The Formula of Concord, which was signed 1577, solidified Lutheran thought but it became a rigid legalistic doctrine which characterized the Scholastic era of Protestantism. Through this Formula, Lutheran doctrine on issues such as original sin, good works, the Lord's Supper and the *adiaphora* of the faith were codified. The codification of the Lutheran doctrine led to a mechanistic and legalistic faith where the Sacraments became empty rituals, and church attendance was perfunctory. John Brenner states: "Some Lutheran rulers converted to Calvinism as the Reformed faith spread. Lutherans countered with precise doctrinal formulations, extensive dogmatical works, and often-bitter polemics. Lutheranism of this age, therefore, tended to be a bit dry and to aim at the head more than the heart."³

Johann Arndt

Johann Arndt, a devotional writer and pastor, addressed this mechanization of the Lutheran faith in his tome *True Christianity*. Born in 1555, Arndt entered school studying medicine and the sciences. He became very ill, and vowed to God that if he would be made well again, he would enter into God's service. Keeping his vow, he studied at several Lutheran universities including Wittenberg. He accepted a pastorate in 1583 in Badeborn. His pastorate was short lived when Duke George who was an avid Calvinist asked Arndt to remove certain fixtures and stop exorcisms. Accepting a pastorate in Quedlinberg, he remained there for nine years but again was asked to leave, this time by the people.

² *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2001), 118.

³ John M. Brenner, *The Spirit Called Pietism – Historical Analysis and Contemporary Concerns*. Paper was presented at the WELS Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention, June 8-9, 2004. <http://www.wlssays.net/authors/B/BrennerSpirit/BrennerSpirit.pdf> (accessed September 3, 2007).

Arndt became concerned over the teachings of some theologians who placed an emphasis in the legal work of Christ on the Cross, rather than on the heartfelt change that makes a true Christian. In the foreward of his book *True Christianity*, written in 1608, he attacks what he saw in the Lutheran faith and its' theology by writing "Many think theology is a mere science, or rhetoric, whereas it is a living experience and practice. Everyone now endeavors to be eminent and distinguished in the world, but no one is willing to learn to be pious."⁴

True Christianity became the starting point of the Pietist movement. Combining medieval mysticism and Lutheran theology, Arndt writes from the heart about the disciplines of the Christian life: meditation, reflection, prayer, and reading of God's Word. One of Arndt's influences was Angela of Foligno, the "Mistress of Theologians." One can see this influence in the second book of *True Christianity*.⁵ Arndt's second influence was Johann Tauler a Dominican mystic of the fourteenth-century. Tauler's sermons and some attributed to him, were collected and Arndt wrote the foreword to this collection in a 1621 edition.⁶ Tauler's mystical experience, the *Gelassenheit*, or total surrender to Christ led Arndt towards this direction. *Gelassenheit* is defined as "the soul growing in conformity to Christ, knowing the 'bitter Christ' of the Cross, sharing his tribulations, leaving creaturely desires behind, and ultimately attaining that complete renunciation called 'Gelassenheit'"⁷ This total surrender is what Arndt describes as "a developing progression in a believer's love for God."⁸

⁴ Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*. Erb, Peter C. ed. Glenn P. Anderson (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 21.

⁵ For a side by side comparison of Arndt and Angela of Foligno's writing see the introduction to Peter Erb's translation of *True Christianity*. 10-12.

⁶ Both Book Two and Book Three of *True Christianity* are heavily influenced by Tauler's writing and are often quoted within these books.

⁷ Lowell H. Zuck, "Spiritual Renewal in the Radical Reformation Tradition," *Brethren Life and Thought*. 26 (Wint 1981): 18-30.

⁸ Erb, 13.

True Christianity is comprised of six Books. The first Book is titled *Liber Scripurae*. This book concentrates on the *Gelassenheit* of the Christian and knowledge of God. Knowledge of God for Arndt is not an intellectual assent of a Creator, but a relationship with Him. Arndt writes:

It is also with the true knowledge of God. This does not consist in words or in mere learning but in a living, loving, gracious, powerful consolation in which through grace one tastes the sweetness, joyousness, loveliness, and graciousness of God in his heart and lives in it. This is what Psalm 84:2 speaks of ‘My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God,’ and Psalm 63:3: ‘Your steadfast love is better than life.’ In these Psalms the joy and sweetness of God in the faithful heart is described. Thus, a man lives in God and God in him; he knows God in truth and is known by him.”⁹

Book two, *Liber Vitae Christus*, addresses a life in Christ, including the fruits (chapters 4-6), the characteristics of daily repentance (7-10), and prayer, love and humility (11-25). The second half of the book concerns prayer and praise and the contemplative life. The third book is *Liber Conscientiae*. Arndt writes, “So that you might properly understand this Third Book, know that it is intended to point out how you are to seek and find the kingdom of God in yourself (Luke 17:21).”¹⁰ Book four, *Liber Naturae* is about Creation and man. Only in the posthumous printings of *True Christianity* were books five and six added. Book five consists of Arndt’s writings on various topics i.e., *On True Faith and Holy Life*, *On the Union of the Faithful with Jesus Christ*, *Our Head*, and *On the Holy Trinity*. The sixth book includes answers to Arndt’s critics, some letters and two prefaces to his *Theologia deutsch*. Arndt’s book was extremely popular with twenty printings before his death in 1621 and 125 printings before the end of the eighteenth-century.

⁹ Arndt, *True Christianity*, Book I, Chapter 11, 69.

¹⁰ Arndt, *True Christianity*, Book III, Forward, 221.

Philip Jacob Spener

Early Years

Philip Jacob Spener was born in Rappoltsweiler, Germany on January 13, 1635 into a Lutheran family. Rappoltsweiler was a primarily a Catholic city under the governance of the Bishop of Basel, and because of this Philip was baptized in the chapel of the ruling family, the Rappolstiens. The Lutherans at this time could not worship in a town church, could not receive the sacraments nor could they attend a Lutheran school. Lutherans would have to travel to the near-by towns to worship in a Lutheran church.

Spener's piety was aroused early in his life through the influences of people and books. The Countess Agatha von Rappoltstein, his godmother at baptism, was both a spiritual influence and his patron. She funded his university education in an endowment after her death. Spener wrote very little of her influence except in his autobiography (*Lebenslauf*) in which he mentions the impact of her death on him.

While still a young boy, Spener read devotional material voraciously, particularly three Puritan texts. His reading included Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian how to Walk, that He may Please God* which was first published in 1610. This book contained meditations for every time of the day, for meals, and instructions on how to read the Bible in a year.¹¹ This Puritan manual for devotions captured the attention of the young Spener with its description of the state of the Christian in life, death and resurrection. The second book that influenced Spener, again of Puritan theology, was Emmanuel Sonthomb's *Golden Jewel*. The third book was Arndt's *True Christianity*, of which Spener considered second only to the Bible.

¹¹ This work is now public domain and not currently printed. It can be read on-line at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bayly/piety.html> (accessed November 23, 2007).

Spener was born fifteen years after the first printing of Arndt's *True Christianity* at the height of the Thirty Years War. Raised in a religious home, Spener read the Bible and Arndt's book as his daily devotions. Spener quoted Arndt in his article, *The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures*, stating: "Further help for finding a deeper meaning can be found in Arndt's *True Christianity* Book I, Chapter 6. Here Arndt treats the proper spiritual interpretation and allegorical interpretation."¹²

Probably the biggest influence on the young Spener (pre-University) was his brother-in-law, Joachim Stoll. Spener makes reference to this influential man in his *Pia Desideria* as "a well versed man, wonderfully endowed by God, equipped by long experience in matters advantageous to the common welfare, and one whom I have always respected as a father."¹³ It was Stoll who taught him his catechism class, and it was he who first introduced Spener to Arndt's *True Christianity*. Stoll was his teacher, but it was his pastoral concern for the young boy that influenced him the most. While Spener was reading Bayly and Sonthomb, the other worldliness of the books was causing Spener to have an imbalanced view of Christianity. Seeing this, Stoll recommended that Spener read Daniel Dycke's *Know Yourself and True Repentance*.¹⁴

Stoll's influence on Spener reached beyond the few books that he recommended to the young Pietist. Stoll was also in charge of the pre-university education of the now teenage Spener. Holding a Masters degree from the Strassburg University, Stoll began to instruct the thirteen year old Spener in preparation to entering the university. Stoll instructed him in

¹² Erb, 75.

¹³ Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*. Trans. Theodore G. Tappert. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 34.

¹⁴ K. James Stein in his book *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* suggests that Stoll's concern for Spener in what he read was not so much concern that he was getting an imbalanced view of Christianity as Stoll believed there was a "secret poison" contained in these English authors, 39.

philosophy using Johannes Stier's series of texts on Aristotelian philosophy, ethics and metaphysics and Justus Lipsius' *On Perseverance in the Midst of Public Evils* influenced Spener in the doctrines of patience and temperance. Stoll also taught the nascent preacher homiletics, not in a formal manner, but through his preaching.

University Years

With a recommendation from Stoll, Spener began his studies at Strassburg University studying philosophy and languages of classical antiquity. Spener was a gifted student in the languages mastering Greek, Hebrew and Arabic. His abilities in these languages progressed to the point where there was no one at the university that could further teach him. He then studied the Talmud and other Jewish writings in Rappoltsweiler with a rabbi. Though his abilities and successes in the languages are considerable, his major course of study was philosophy. Immersing himself in the writings of the Latin authors like Seneca and Cicero, Spener's thesis dealt with this philosophy and natural theology. His thesis titled "Conformity of the Reasonable Creature to the Creator" drifted from his original thought and became an argument against Thomas Hobbes who denied immortality and the Last Judgment. Upon receiving his Master's degree, Spener continued at the university studying history with Heinrich Boecler, and became an instructor in the area of genealogy and heraldry.

Spener entered into theological studies in 1654 where Johann Schmidt taught theology. There was a profound influence on Spener by this professor, preacher and theologian. Schmidt's knowledge of Luther and his championing of teaching catechism to both young and old made him known as "father in Christ" among the students. So profound was his influence on Spener that in the *Pia Desideria* Schmidt is mentioned in the fifth

“Proposal to Correct Conditions in the Church.” Spener describes him as: “The sainted Dr. John Schmidt, my dear father in Christ who served the Christian Church so well, especially at Strassburg...”¹⁵

By the age of twenty four, Spener had completed his studies at Strassburg and continued on to Basel University. Unlike his fellow classmates who went to the citadels of Lutheran theology and doctrine like Wittenberg and Leipzig, Spener chose Basel for the purpose of further studies in rabbinics and the Talmud with the Hebraist Johann Buxtorf. Buxtorf was also the teacher of Spener’s mentor Johann Schmidt. Spener stayed at Basel from the fall of 1659 to the summer of 1660, during which his exegetical abilities were honed.

While in Geneva for six months, Spener stayed with Anton Leger, a professor of theology, who gave him great insights into a pre-Reformation group, the Waldensians. The Waldensians were, and to this day continue to be, a small sect that is centered in Italy, but with adherents in Spain and Germany. Peter Waldo began this sect as a result of a conversation that Waldo had with a Catholic priest after the death of a friend. When asked the way to get to heaven the priest gave Waldo the same advice as Jesus did to the rich young man in Matthew 19:21: sell your possessions and give to the poor. Waldo did just that and formed a group which was called the “Poor men of Lyons.” This group was considered heretical by Rome and Waldo was excommunicated. According to Robert Root, the Waldensians aligned with the Presbyterians, and it was the Calvinist French speaking Swiss

¹⁵ Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, ed. Glenn P. AndersonTheodore G. Tappert, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 105.

that in 1686 that gave them refuge against the monarchs of France and Savoy who were determined to eradicate them.¹⁶

Waldensians are Calvinist. They baptize infants and have a strong emphasis on preaching the Gospel and repentance of sin. Dennis McCallum lists eleven separate ways Waldensians diverge from Catholic doctrine, including the belief that Scripture alone is sufficient to guide men to salvation, that everyone is able to preach from the Word, priests have no particular authority and relics and artifacts are not to be revered.¹⁷ It was the dedication to the poor that most influenced Spener in his theology.

In Geneva, Spener met with what was to be his most influential contact – Jean de Labadie. Ordained as a Catholic priest, he joined the Jesuits and with his strong devotional and intellectual abilities, concentrated on Augustinian mysticism. It was in the reading of Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and his dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church that he left the Jesuits to join the Reformed Church. Spener had often heard Labadie preach in Geneva, and as a means of improving his mastery of the French language, used Labadie’s tracts for reading material. He was so impressed with Labadie’s *The Practice of Christian Prayer and Meditation*, that he translated this work into German and published it under the title *Brief Instruction Concerning Devout Meditation*. Spener’s association with Labadie (while in Geneva) lasted until Labadie began to publish separatist tracts, which, ironically, caused the pair to separate, though they remained friends and Spener continued to be a defender of Labadie against his critics.

The travels of Spener continued on to Stuttgart, then to Tubingen where he continued his studies in heraldry hoping for a teaching position there. He returned home a more

¹⁶ Robert Root, “The Waldensians,” *Christian Century* 64, no. 38, (1947): 1105-1106.

¹⁷ Dennis McCallum, “The Waldensian Movement From Waldo to the Reformation,” <http://www.xenos.org/essays/waldo1.htm> (accessed August 23, 2007), 13.

committed Lutheran with much scholarly knowledge but with little ecclesiastical learning. This caused some consternation for the young Spener as to which position he should apply. There was a pastorate opening up in Strassburg for which he applied, but his mentor Schmidt wrote the church and stated that Spener was not physically up to the position in hopes that Spener would continue his academic studies. He did accept a position in 1663 for a “free preacher.” This *Freiprediger* position had almost no pastoral care duties so Spener could concentrate on preaching and study. He earned his Doctor of Theology in June of 1664, and on the morning of that very same day was married to Suzanna Ehrhardt. Together they had eleven children, two of which died at birth and one daughter died at age six.

Frankfurt am Main Ministry

After his ministry in Stuttgart, Spener received a call from the city of Frankfurt am Main. This, next to Leipzig was the largest, most commercial city in Germany. The Church there had strict requirements for the position of senior pastor with the holding of a Doctor of Theology degree as primary. Spener was recommended for the position, and after months of negotiations, seeking advice from friends and prayer, Spener accepted the call and arrived on July 20, 1666. This position was to be both a challenge and an opportunity for the relatively inexperienced pastor. His duties included not only weekly preaching, but other pastoral duties, teaching catechism and administration of the other clergy. Here is where the challenge arose. Most of the clergy that Spener was to supervise were almost twice his age, with more pastoral experience. This in the end did not prove to be an issue because of his relaxed leadership style. His relations with the other clergy in the city was so good that he, when

writing his *Pia Desideria*, consulted the members of the ministerium, and credits them in the book.¹⁸

While in Frankfurt, Spener spearheaded many new ideas first was in the area of preaching. Spener preached from the lectionary but grew dissatisfied with it as the same readings were being repeated year after year and the sermon was always prepared from the Gospel reading. Spener started to stray from this tradition, preaching from Paul's Epistles, which he felt were more applicable for teaching a Christian way of life. Beginning in 1676 Spener started preaching from Romans and over the next few years preached from all of Romans and the two Corinthian letters.

Scarcely one hundred years after Luther, the catechisms that he wrote were rarely being taught in the church, and when they were taught it was by a schoolmaster rather than the pastor. Spener came from a strong background in the catechism as he learned from his mentor Stoll, so when he arrived at Frankfurt and learned that the ministerium was actively teaching the catechism, Spener put his energies into supporting their role as teachers of the faith.

Confirmation was not widely practiced in the Lutheran Church in the seventeenth-century. This was a development of the Pietist movement within the Church. Spener became a champion of this rite (he refused to refer to it as a sacrament) as it enabled the youth to reaffirm of their own volition, the baptismal vows their parents made for them. This was not an empty rite but one in which the young person had to learn their catechism and be questioned on it. Confirmation was a requirement for admission to the Lord's Table.

¹⁸ In the chapter "Circumstances of Writing," Spener explains how he laid out his essay before his "dearly beloved colleagues and fellow ministers here." Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*. Trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 33.

Along with preaching and teaching of the catechism, a third hallmark of Pietism developed during Spener's tenure at Frankfurt: *pious groups*. A group of men approached Spener to receive permission to gather together and discuss spiritual things. Under his leadership – and in his home – they met each week on Wednesdays and Sunday evenings and discussed the previous Sunday's sermon, a New Testament passage, prayer and hymn singing. This meeting, what we now refer to as a “small group,” was called *collegia pietatis* or “pious group.” In a later chapter we will see how these *collegia pietatis* became foundational in the development of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Pia Desideria

Spener originally wrote what has become the most recognizable work in the Pietist movement as a preface to a collection of Johann Arndt's sermons on the Church year first published in 1616. *Pia Desideria* originated when a Frankfurt publisher asked Spener to write the preface, but gave him little time in which to write. What developed was a brief, succinct work of utmost impact. After the collection of sermons was released with Spener's preface, requests began to pour in for the preface to be published as a separate work. This caused Spener to append the work with the *Salutation and Circumstances of Writing* which he directed at Lutheran pastors. It was in this *Salutation* that Spener acknowledges his colleagues in ministry and his mentors.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is the *Conspectus of Corrupt Condition in the Church*. Spener addresses the three estates- civil authorities, clergy, common people- and describes the problems with each of these groups *vis a vis* the Church. Rome at that time made a concerted effort to persecute Protestants in many areas of Germany. With this

persecution in the mind of Spener, he opens Part I with both a polemic and a lament against Rome.¹⁹ He does not however, limit his comment to Rome; he also speaks about the Christians in Greece and the Orient who are under similar tyranny of the Turks.

After this evaluation of the Church as a whole, Spener goes on to evaluate the three estates. Under the heading of “Defects in Civil Authorities,” Spener decries the state of the civil authorities and reminds them that they have been freed from the “papal clericalism”²⁰ of Rome, only to fall into the trappings of their new, powerful position. He also reminds them that according to Scripture they were chosen for these positions by God, and should act accordingly. Instead they live in “sins and debaucheries”²¹ that are common to court life.

The next target of Spener’s concern is that of the clergy calling it “thoroughly corrupt.”²² Lamenting the scholastic bent of the clergy, he writes about how these men have learned their theology well, how they have an intellectual grasp of religion, but lack a basic relationship with God. Spener criticizes clergy who actively seek more prestigious pulpits instead of being satisfied and working with their present church. But he admits that even through these men, the Spirit can act in bringing men to faith.

In Part III, Spener enumerates three common “sins” of the laity. In this section Spener addresses three common “sins” among the laity. The first is the rampant drunkenness that pervades Germany. Some argued to Spener that this was just a German trait, a heritage that has been part of the country for generations, but Spener does not concede this argument. He writes about its equality with the other sins including “adulterers, [the] effeminate, [and the]

¹⁹ Spener in the “Conspectus of Corrupt Conditions in the Church” refers to Rome as the anti-Christian Rome and the Babylonian captivity where the heretics dwell.

²⁰ Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson/Theodore G. Tappert (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 43.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. 44.

abusers of themselves with mankind” – that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. The next defect of the laity involves lawsuits. He admits that it is a Christians right to use the civil authorities to settle disputes; Spener maintains that as Christians, we must practice the Golden Rule to settle these disputes. From this he also addresses the “community of goods” which is lacking in the Christian community. Arguing that everything we have is really God’s and that we are only stewards of these possessions, it is only right that we share what God has given. Lastly, Spener laments over the way that the laity does service to God. He admonishes them for their belief that their salvation can come through the *opus operatum* of the Word and sacraments; that by simply receiving the sacraments, attending church services and hearing the Word, you are saved.

Part II of the *Pia Desideria* is titled *The Possibility of Better Conditions in the Church*. In this short section, Spener opines that there are two areas where the Church will improve. The first area is in the conversion of the Jews, using Romans 11:25-26 as his proof text, Spener sees if not all a great majority of the Jews being saved. The second area of concern for Spener is that he believes papal Rome will fall and that the Catholic Church will be destroyed. Using Revelation 18-19 as his text, he believes that the Roman Church will increase for a period of time and then judgment will fall on it, destroying it.

Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church

Spener not only points out the conditions in the Church, he gives ideas on how to improve these conditions. Part III of this book, *Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church*, Spener lays out six ideas that would further his plan for a better Church. It is these

six Proposals, it will be argued, that are the basis for The Evangelical Covenant Church' Affirmations.

The first proposal, in typical confessional Lutheran manner deals with the Word of God. Spener had proposed, "Thought should be given to a more extensive use of the Word of God among us." He was interested in the laity being introduced to Scripture by other means than the Sunday lectionary reading. He proposed that all heads of the house would have a Bible and that he read from it every day with his family. He also encourages people to read the Bible privately, but the most significant thought on this proposal was the formation of *collegia pietatis*. This idea came out of the successful experience that he had as pastor in Frankfurt with some of the men from the area who met at his home to read Scripture, to talk about the previous sermon and to pray for each other. He compares these groups to the assemblies that Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40. Timothy Maschke wrote in his article in the *Lutheran Quarterly*, that these small groups were the "most significant marks of the Pietist movement."²³ James Bemesderfer calls these groups that which "was most effective in changing the social structure of Spener's day."²⁴ Spener was very careful in his writing to underscore that he had not fully developed the idea, and that these groups should be led by ministers, or members of the church who have "a fair knowledge of God"²⁵ The *collegia pietatis* was not a separatist institution, in reality it was an *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*, a church within a church, for the edification of the church members.

Spener thought that these piety groups would be beneficial to both clergy and members of the group. For the clergy, he considered this an opportunity to get to know the

²³ Timothy Maschke, "Philipp Spener's Pia Desideria," *Lutheran Quarterly* 6 (Summer, 1992): 187-204.

²⁴ James O. Bemesderfer, "Pietism: The Other Side," *Journal of Religious Thought* 25, no. 2 (1969): 35.

²⁵ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 89.

members well, to understand their weaknesses and to direct his sermons towards those weaknesses. He also considered the bond between the pastor and the members as something that could be strengthened. For the laity, these groups allowed them an opportunity to worship in a manner that cannot be achieved in a large institutional setting, and the opportunity to respectfully ask questions.

As mentioned above, the concept of these small groups was not to separate from the Church, but in reality there was a small faction of people who saw this as their chance to separate from the Lutheran Church. “Pharisaism developed as the members of these groups began to consider themselves better than those who weren't participating in them. The conventicles began to split churches because the people in the *collegia pietatis* thought that it was necessary to separate from those whom they considered to be unconverted or second-class Christians in the established congregations.”²⁶ One of the original members of Spener’s *collegia* did leave the Lutheran Church. Johann Jakob Schütz, a lawyer and original member of Spener’s home group in Frankfurt started another group of separatist Pietists known as radical Pietists. They considered these small groups to be the true, invisible Church.²⁷ It is this radical Pietism that led to the formation of the Church of the Brethren.²⁸

The second Proposal of Spener was “the establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood.”²⁹ Following Luther in his thought, Spener advocated the spiritual priesthood of all believers, performing all the spiritual acts of the minister, from preaching to the sacraments. Calling the clerical division a trick of the devil, he condemns the Catholic

²⁶ John M. Brenner, *The Spirit Called Pietism – Historical Analysis and Contemporary Concerns*. Paper was presented at the WELS Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention, June 8-9, 2004. <http://www.wlssays.net/authors/B/BrennerSpirit/BrennerSpirit.pdf> (Accessed September 5, 2007).

²⁷ Christina Bucher, ““People of the Covenant” Small-Group Bible Study: A Twentieth Century Revival of the *Collegia Pietatis*.” *Brethren Life and Thought*. 43 (Sum-Fall 1998): 47-58.

²⁸ For a comprehensive history of the Church of the Brethren and radical Pietism see Wallace B. Landes, Jr. article in *Brethren Life and Thought*, 43 (Sum-Fall 1998): 1-111.

²⁹ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 92.

institution of the papacy and the hierarchical clergy saying that this made the laity lazy in their spiritual walk. With priests reading the Word to the people, and expounding on the Word, the people do not take the initiative to read the Bible for themselves and exegete the passage to find its personal relevance. He also writes that this division of clergy and laity has set up the possibility of abuse by the clergy. We see this as one of the main causes of reform both in the Reformation led by Luther et al, and in the Pietist movement led by Spener. Spener is very blunt in his condemnation of the clergy, not only in this *Pia Desideria*, but also in *On Hindrances of Theological Studies* where he writes “Although there is not a great deal of wealth to be gained in the church, still it is not to be denied that some parents believe that their children can, as pastors, earn bread with less work and toil.”³⁰ The position of pastor became a vocation, where once it had been an avocation. The clergy was just another good position for an ambitious man, without even the necessity of believing in Christ. Aristotelian philosophy had pervaded theological studies, and intellectualism became the more important than a commitment to Jesus Christ.

Spener’s concept of the Church was that there is the invisible Church consisting of true believers, and the visible Church, which he saw as the Lutheran Church, which provided for the preaching of the Word and administering of the sacraments. His ecclesiology did not challenge the traditional Lutheran doctrines of the Church, but according to Dennis McCallum, “Spener’s ecclesiology had to do with the emancipation of the laity to do real ministry in the church.”³¹

³⁰ Philipp Jacob Spener, “On Hindrances of Theological Studies,” in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press. 1983), 65.

³¹ McCallum, Dennis H. *Philip Jacob Spener’s Contribution to the Protestant Doctrine of the Church*. Doctoral research paper, Ashland University, 1987. http://www.xenos.org/essays/spen_a.htm (Accessed September 7, 2007) 11.

The spiritual priesthood was for all believing Christians. In an essay titled “The Spiritual Priesthood,” Spener almost like Aquinas, puts forth seventy questions with answers regarding the spiritual priesthood, from who is this priesthood to how and when it is appropriate to administer the sacraments. This proposal is closely tied with the first, encouraging the laity to become actively involved in their own spirituality.

Spener ties the first two Proposals with the third – “it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice.”³² Faith and practice cannot be separated. This became a tenet of the Pietist movement, embodied by Francke who will be discussed later, and to become one of the Affirmations of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Spener uses 1 John 3:11-18 as his proof text, where John writes to believers in the early Church to love one another, a recurring theme in John’s Letters and in Spener’s writings. Spener writes that this brotherly love should be towards fellow believers first then to the rest of the world. He goes as far as to suggest that believers find someone in whom they can trust, who is a more mature Christian, to confide in their progress in this brotherly love. This confessor, as it is now known, a spiritual director, would hold persons accountable for their actions toward their fellow believers and to all men. Brotherly love is not only about a passive non-aggression attitude, it is about an active lifestyle that puts this love into practice.

The fourth Proposal addresses both a condition of Spener’s time, and what is occurring in the Church today. Maschke writes that “Controversy had become a major activity among Lutheran scholastic theologians as they sought to clarify their orthodox doctrinal positions and distinguish themselves from other Christians, especially from other

³² Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 95.

Protestants.”³³ The irony here is that Spener’s argument mirrors that of the Reformers against the Catholic Church. “The Reformation’s concentration on the Scripture was a break with scholasticism, a turning away from the scholastic ‘paradigm.’”³⁴

This Proposal was directed at two sets of scholastics. The first set that Spener addresses are the heretics. Referring to them as the “erring” he writes that they (the heretics) should be led to the truth by praying for them, by setting an example for them, by corrective teaching, by loving them, and by not staking everything on argumentation. Spener also addresses those within the Lutheran Confession and here he urges them not to argue the minutia of doctrinal issues. This Proposal put love above the disputes, stating that no souls are won in arguments over doctrine and as Maschke wrote: “Disputes should be balanced in such a way that Christian living and loving also is exhibited.”³⁵

Spener’s fifth Proposal reflects his love for proper education for ministry. He writes that “if such suitable persons are to be called to the ministry they must be available, and hence they must be trained in our schools and universities.”³⁶ On this subject, Spener concentrates his writing more so than any other Proposal. He begins this section with a polemic on the secular schools and faculty. Arguing that professors need to be examples of piety to the seminarians, and that there needs to be devotional material assigned along with the scholastic material being learned, Spener urges the Lutheran universities to be different than the others, and refers back to the first Proposal in which he suggests the formation of a *collegia pietatis* among the faculty. That these schools cannot be the centers of carousing and

³³ Maschke, 193.

³⁴ Klaus Schwarzwaller, “The Common commentary on the Augsburg Confession,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 3, (1989): 299.

³⁵ Maschke, 194.

³⁶ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 103.

drinking that the other schools had become, but must be institutes of piety as well as higher education.

The last Proposal is a continuation of the fifth: “that sermons be so prepared by all that their purpose (faith and its fruits) may be achieved in the hearers to the greatest possible degree.”³⁷ This Proposal was in reaction to what sermons had become in the Lutheran Church. Preachers were using foreign language quotes that the parishioners could not understand, and their sermons had become intellectual arguments without the salvific content that the hearers needed. This comes out of his influence from Arndt whose sermons reflected this attitude.

This Proposal and the fifth are so closely tied that the sixth could almost be considered a continuation of the fifth. Spener argues that there needs to be a better education of the preachers, beginning with apologetics being taught in German rather than Latin so that they would have a firmer grasp on the subject and be better equipped to teach in the churches. Sermons must appeal to the heart rather than the mind and subjects of sermons could be taken from Luther’s *Small Catechism*.

The *Pia Desideria* was received well in Lutheran Germany with letters being written in defense of this book. Spener had now made a name for himself but he was not without criticism. This book was criticized for its idea of *collegia pietatis*. Balthasar Mentzer, a superintendent from Darmstadt, thought these small groups were unbiblical and filled with erring spirits³⁸ and he became more of an opponent when some of the Darmstadt Pietists split with the Lutheran Church. It was Menzer’s influence as a superintendent that caused the first

³⁷ Ibid., 115.

³⁸ Stein, 103.

decree to be issued against the Pietists, however, there was never a charge against Spener himself, only his followers.

Spener's Berlin Ministry

After a short controversial five years in Dresden, following his Frankfurt ministry, Spener moved to Berlin. Here as pastor, he had all the preaching duties but none of the administrative duties he had in Dresden. It was here the Spener laid aside the lectionary as he began in earnest to preach from all of Scripture.

In 1691, the same year that Spener came to Berlin, Elector Friedrich issued a decree converting an existing knight's academy in Halle into a university. Spener suggested Justus Breithaupt become the first professor of theology at this new university. Francke, who was a student and disciple of Spener, became professor of Greek and Oriental languages. The friendship and mentorship of Spener to Francke would last until the former's death, however Spener did formally object to a sermon of Francke's criticizing the faculty of Halle. The University of Halle was officially dedicated on July 1, 1694 with Francke taking the lead role in making this a Pietist institution. According to Stein, "Spener was a positive supporter of Francke and the Halle institutions."³⁹

Spener's Theology

Prayer and Scripture, two of the Evangelical Covenant Church's affirmations, were an important part of Spener's life and teaching as can be seen by the small groups that he formed while pastoring, and from his writings. In an essay titled *The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures* from 1694, Spener inextricably links the two. In his first point

³⁹ Ibid., 133.

he writes, “The first means to proper Bible reading is heartfelt prayer”⁴⁰ while his second point addresses prayer coming from a “heart pleasing to God.”⁴¹ This emphasis on the Word is illustrated in Spener’s first proposal in his *Pia Desideria*.

Spener’s writings continually appeal to the joining of Scripture and prayer. In his *Meditation on the Suffering of Christ*, a devotional written on Luke 18:31-43, the introduction contains a passage that clearly illustrates these twin directions of a Christian’s life:

First, however, we turn to our heavenly Father and pray to him humbly that, as he gave us his beloved son to suffer for us, he might also give to us his Holy Spirit to properly understand the heights of that precious act of goodness....” (emphasis mine)⁴²

God Pleasing Prayer is a sermon on John 16:23-30 in which Spener outlines the “basis, method and fruit of prayer.”⁴³ Spener makes the connection of prayer with a relationship with God and neighbor, for it is out of love for God and our neighbor that we pray. He writes that the fruit of prayer is “(1) God hear our prayers... (2) Through it we practice faith, love, hope, and patience...(3) The chief use is that through it God’s honor is made great and glorified...”⁴⁴ Both God and neighbor are shown love through prayer as we pray to glorify God and pray for others. Again, Spener in this essay, makes the connection between Scripture and prayer writing that God’s Word is one of the general means of prayer.

Prayer and God’s Word again are inextricably linked in *Christian Joy*, a sermon on John 20:19-31. Spener, writing on the spiritual joy in Christians, lists one of the means of joy

⁴⁰ Philipp Jakob Spener, “The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures,” in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 71. (Emph., mine.)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

as coming from the “Holy Spirit who is the spirit of joy; we must come to through prayer.”⁴⁵

However, Spener writes that these are general means of joy, he points out that there is praxis in belief. He lists a godly life and a good conscience as particular means of Christian joy.

This point is also brought out in *The Necessary and Useful Reading of Scriptures*. He writes:

He who has (who has gained the knowledge of the divine Word and has invested it according to his ability as a true servant), to him it will be given (by the power of further light of grace and wisdom to grasp more), and he will have the fullness (namely, more with which to serve others)...⁴⁶

Addressing the situation within the Church during this era, Spener was a vocal critic of the clergy serving in the churches. He considered many to be men who, due to pressure from family, inability to perform any other labors, or as a means of power and prestige—used the positions as leaders of the church for the purpose of anything but to serve as the shepherds that God calls men to be. This criticism took two directions; the first is criticism against the clergy and the second in the re-affirmation of the priesthood of all believers put forth by Luther. The first direction was written in 1680 in a sermon titled *On Hindrances to Theological Studies*, and the second in *The Spiritual Priesthood* in 1677.⁴⁷

One must understand the conditions of the Church at this time to truly appreciate Spener’s writings. The State and the Church were bonded in a symbiotic relationship, where the State defended the Church, and the Church acted as employees of the State. This was a result of the division within both Church and State during the Reformation. There were areas that were still loyal to papal Rome and those who sided with the Lutheran territories. During a time of religious intolerance and hostility, the Church depended on the State’s defense to survive. When king or ruler of an area made his religion the state religion, it offered security

⁴⁵ Ibid., 95-96.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁷ For these sermons, see Peter C. Erb, trans, *Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

to them. Lutherans were fighting with Calvinists, and each was fighting with the Catholics. It was not until the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which was a pair of treaties ending the Thirty Years War and the Eighty Years War, that the Peace of Augsburg of 1555 was recognized by all countries. This treaty ensured that all nations had the right to their own religion, and that people who were not part of the state church, but were living in that state had protection to worship without recrimination or persecution.

With the state churches being set up by the rulers, and citizens of the country being members of the church by their citizenship, there was a deadness to religion. Richard Balge states: "A kind of Caesaropapism had replaced the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Germany after the Reformation. The German princes, as 'the chief members of the church,' were asked to take the place of Catholic bishops as chief ecclesiastical administrators."⁴⁸ Spener, writing to effect change addressed the problem from the top down. In the above mentioned article on clergy and theological studies, Spener criticizes the "system" from early childhood education to the teaching of clergy. He said, "A far greater hindrance to theological study, however, is the thoughtless and unwholesome manner in which parents raise their children. Few learn self-denial. Pride is not rooted out."⁴⁹ He continues to chide parents for the mechanistic manner of learning prayers without thought of what they are saying. Parents are also blamed for pushing their sons into ministry for the wrong reason; pastors can make a living without hard work. Then there is the open criticism of the schools in which these future pastors are trained. Spener fixes blame to the school's religious instruction when he writes, "religious instruction is poorly taught, teachers seldom know what a Christian is, and students who go

⁴⁸ Richard D. Balge, "Pietism's Teaching on Church and Ministry As Evidenced in its Pastoral Practice," Essay by Professor Emeritus Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. <http://www.wlsessays.net/authors/B/BalgePietism/BalgePietism.PDF> (Accessed 9-07-07).

⁴⁹ Phillip Jakob Spener, "On Hindrances To Theological Studies," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb, (New York: Paulist Press. 1983), 65.

on to further education take to the university all the evils they have learned earlier.”⁵⁰ Spener in his *Pia Desideria* lists as one of his proposals that ministers must be trained in their schools and universities to be effective, spiritual servants.

Spener does not only look to the clergy for reform, in *The Spiritual Priesthood*, Spener in seventy questions and answers, makes the case for the priesthood of all believers. Question number ten asks:

Who then are such spiritual priests?

All Christians without distinction (1 Peter 2:9), old and young, male and female, bond and free (Gal. 3:28).⁵¹

Spener held each individual accountable for his spiritual life, believing that each Christians are spiritual priests offering our bodies and our souls as sacrifices, interceding with prayer for ourselves and others (Question 24). The Christian is also a prophet in that he can interpret Scripture for himself and for others (Question 26). In an era where “church goers” only hear the Word as read and interpreted by the pastor, Spener argues that Scripture is for all to read and interpret, explaining the perspicuity of Scripture in Question 31.⁵²

August Hermann Francke

Where Spener, and to some degree Arndt, wrote and spoke about the relationship between faith and works, Francke, Spener’s godson, put this theory into practice. Francke, who at age twenty-four had a conversion experience. Up to this point, Francke read the Bible and devotional books, attended Mass and went to confession, but even as a pastor, he had doubts about his religion and God. He writes in his autobiography:

⁵⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁵¹ Ibid., 51.

⁵² Ibid., 54, 55.

I thought that I could hold to the Holy Scriptures but as soon as this came into my mind I wondered, who knows if the Holy Scripture is God's Word; the Turks have their Koran, and the Jews their Talmud, and who is to say which one of the tree is correct... I no longer believed in a God in Heaven and therefore I could not hold either to God or to man's word, and I found little strength in the one as in the other.⁵³

One cannot help to see the parallels in testimony between Francke and Augustine in his Confessions. Francke writes:

God however, the faithful and true one, came to me at all times with his grace, and prepared for me at the same time the way to live more pleasing to him day by day.⁵⁴

Compare to Augustine:

Praise and honour be yours, O Fountain of mercy! As my misery grew worse and worse, you came the closer to me. Though I did not know it, your hand was poised ready to lift me from the mire and wash me clean.⁵⁵

Again Francke:

First I could count the sins but then the chief source opened itself, namely unbelief or mere false belief with which I had so long deceived myself. And there my whole life and everything which I had done, said, and thought was presented before me as sin and a great abomination before God. My heart was put in great dread that it had one as an enemy whom it denied and in whom it could not believe. This sorrow brought much weeping to me and I am not generally accustomed to weep... and at other times I fell upon my knees and cried to the one whom I nevertheless did not know.⁵⁶

Augustine:

For I felt that I was still the captive of my sins, and in misery I kept crying "How long shall I go on saying 'tomorrow, tomorrow'? Why not now? Why not make an end of my ugly sins at this moment? I was asking myself these questions, weeping all the while with the most bitter sorrow in my heart..."⁵⁷

⁵³ August Hermann Francke, "Autobiography" in *Pietists: Selected Writings*. ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press. 1983), 103.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁵ Augustine. *Confessions*, trans.R.S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Books, 1961), VI, 16, 131.

⁵⁶ Francke, 103

⁵⁷ Augustine, VIII, 12, 177.

Other comparisons can be made such as the friend with whom each studies Scripture and the assurance each felt upon conversion.

Francke:

With great care and doubt I had fallen to my knees but with an unspeakable joy and a great certainty I stood up again. When I knelt down I did not believe that there was a God but when I stood up I believed it to the point of giving my blood without fear or doubt.⁵⁸

Augustine:

For in an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.⁵⁹

While Francke was in Leipzig, he and fellow instructors formed a *collegium philobiblicum*, to study the Scriptures. The influence of Spener on Francke began to pour out and Pietism flowed through Francke. Soon his students were forming small study groups, to the detriment of their other studies. This resulted in the passing of a Conventicle Act in 1670 forbidding people to meet in these conventicles to study the Word.

His continued teaching and forming of these small groups caused him to be expelled by the authorities in 1691. Spener with Christian Thomasius started a university in Halle and invited Francke to be a professor at this new university. Also secured for him was a pastorate in the nearby town of Glauch. The University of Halle soon became the center of Pietist thought. As mentioned above, Francke took following in the footsteps of Jesus seriously and put his theory into practice. In 1695 he started a school for the poor, a preparatory school, *the Paedagogium*, and a Latin school. At his death in 1727, 2,200 children were learning in his schools, and 134 children were housed in his orphanages. Francke outlined several *Paedagogium*, or institutions that he implemented in 1698, including:

⁵⁸ Francke, 105

⁵⁹ Augustine, VIII, 12, 178.

- An institution for the education of the sons of lords, nobles, and other important people.
- A *Paedagogium* or institution for the education of children who are supported and educated by foreigners and partly by their parents in distant places.
- The orphanage concerning which with other similar institutions there is a printed description.
- Six tables for poor students (70 in all) are free of cost.
- A hospital with special *legatium*.
- A poor house for certain old men and women with a *legatium*.
- A school for poor boys.
- A school for poor girls who can go to it free and return to their homes again after their education.⁶⁰

In all there are twenty three institutes that Francke organized with the last word from this document reading “Ah Lord may it be a success.”⁶¹ Edward Spannus in an article about Halle, wrote Francke was concerned, not only with the physical welfare of the children, but the improvement of the mind. They studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew as well as the sciences and arts.⁶²

The institutions that Francke birthed were not without criticism, even today. In a 2004 Seattle Catholic article, the sense of disdain is palpable:

Francke's Pietist work, which he wished to serve as a model for a worldwide Christian renewal, involved the creation at Halle of what are referred to as the Anstalten or Frankesche Stiftungen, various institutions at whose core lay clearly charitable ventures like a well-developed orphanage. Since charitable endeavors required money to survive, however, Francke's foundations also encompassed commercial organizations designed to procure needed funds. Educational projects intended to form men with the iron-like inner discipline that could sustain constant commitment to enterprise and the service of one's neighbor also played a crucial role in his labor at Halle. Francke provided Lebens- Regeln to guide them, rules which emphasized the task of breaking

⁶⁰ August Hermann Francke, “Outline of All the Institutes at Glauch near Halle Which Provide Special Blessings Partially for the Education of Youth and Partially for the Maintenance of the Poor, as the Institutes Exist in December, 1698,” in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press.1983): 163-164. These are just a sampling of the 23 institutions Francke listed in his report.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁶² Edward Spannaus, “Leibnitz, Halle and the American Revolution,” *Fidelio*, XII, No. 1, (Spring 2003): 33-44.

the individual's self-will and rebuilding it the way his own conversion experience demonstrated God unquestionably wanted.⁶³

Francke and the new University of Halle were not content with ministering only to the local population, missions work became an integral part of Pietism through this institution.

Languages were taught through a new Department of Oriental Languages so that missionaries could be more effective faster when they went out into the mission field. By the turn of the century, Halle was the leading European center for the study of languages, with an Oriental Institute and a Judaic Institute, among others, and there also existed a major project for translating--and printing--the Bible into many languages.⁶⁴ Scripture was being translated into other languages and for the first time God's Word was read in countries that were ignored up until now. In a letter to Leibnitz, Francke recounts a mission trip to Tranquebar, East Indies. As a result of this information, Leibnitz criticized the Protestant churches for their lack of global missions, citing the Roman Catholic Churches as the ideal.⁶⁵ Francke saw the possibility of missions leading to ecumenical inroads – the very uniting of the Church Universal.⁶⁶

Nicolas Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf

Born in Dresden in 1700, Zinzendorf's father was a personal friend of Philip Jacob Spener, and at a young age, Nicolas had a devout personal relationship with Christ. Raised by his Pietist grandmother Baroness Henrietta Catherine von Gersdorf, the young Nicolas was

⁶³ Dr. John C. Rao, "Half the Business of Destruction Done". *Seattle Catholic-A Journal of Catholic News and Views*. 28 (December, 2004) http://www.seattlecatholic.com/article_20041228.html. (accessed August 25, 2007).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁵ For a detailed article on the relationship between Francke, Leibnitz and Cotton Mather in the United States, see Spannaus' article "Leibnitz, Halle and the American Revolution." *Fidelio*, XII, No. 1 (Spring 2003).

⁶⁶ This emphasis on mission work, started at Halle, was carried on through the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). Soon after incorporation, this new denomination was sending missionaries to Alaska, China, and Africa. More on the mission work of the ECC later in this thesis.

immersed in the Pietist tradition and to instill this even deeper, was sent to Halle to the *Paedagogium* founded by Francke. Nicolas stayed there until he was seventeen, but then at the insistence of his family went to Wittenberg to study law and fulfilled his family's desire by becoming part of the electorate.

Zinzendorf did not abandon his Pietist roots while in the secular world, but made his life a living testimony to all around him. Being part of the electorate enabled the Count to aid a German speaking group from the province of Moravia fleeing from persecution for their beliefs. This group of *Unitas Fratrum* led by a carpenter Christian David, sought refuge in the Province of Saxony. There Zinzendorf allowed them their refuge and became their spiritual leader in 1727. Under local custom, an organized village could give itself secular organization with its own rules. In 1727, the community of Herrnhut chose its elders with Zinzendorf as lord of the estate. After the elders were selected a communion service was held and during this service Zinzendorf was made the Moravian's spiritual leader. This date of August 13, 1727 is considered the rebirth of the *Unitas Fratrum*, or the Moravian Church.

Herrnhut became organized under Zinzendorf with specific goals and characteristics. His organizational quest came as an outcropping of his duties as King's Councilor at Dresden. In Zinzendorf's *Brotherly Union and Agreement at Herrnhut* of 1727, the Count lays out forty two rules, characteristics and goals of this new community. He proposed this compact on July 4, 1727 and was the first to sign. This was following a more legal and procedural document *Manorial Injunctions and Prohibitions* which Zinzendorf compiled to end the schisms that were forming in the Moravian community. In rule three of the *Brotherly Union and Agreement at Herrnhut* he describes the characteristics of "a true member of Christ's body, and these we, the inhabitants of Herrnhut, who simply adhere to the

foundation built on the Word of God, deem to be the most sure.”⁶⁷ Rule seven exemplifies the almost monastic aura of Herrnhut. It states: “No one is to enter into confidential intercourse with people that are notoriously wicked, or altogether worldly minded, lest offense should thereby be given...”⁶⁸ Even the interaction between the sexes is strictly determined and restricted with rule twenty proscribing the manner in which people may be engaged and married.

The Moravians were a separatist group but under Zinzendorf and his ideal of *ecclesiola in ecclesia* maintained their relation with the Lutheran state church. These Moravians had a heart for missions work. They were ready to go anywhere to further the knowledge of Christ and to do His service. This missionary fire soon enflamed Zinzendorf and he found himself in the West Indies in 1732, 1738 and 1739. London was his next stop where the Moravians had been for several years. He then caught a ship to America where he had the opportunity to name a new settlement that the Moravians from Georgia founded in Pennsylvania. This settlement he named Bethlehem and it became the center of the Moravian church in America.

Herrnhut was now the center of missionary work, sending men and women all across the globe. By 1771 there were mission centers in Surinam, Guiana, Egypt, and South Africa. However there was controversy brewing in the Moravian’s separatism. Despite Zinzendorf’s ideal, the Moravian church was becoming a separate denomination, but with the acceptance

⁶⁷ Nicolas Ludwig Count Von Zinzendorf, “Brotherly Union and Agreement at Herrnhut,” in *Pietists Selected Writings*, Peter Erb ed. Glenn P. Anderson (New York: Paulist Press. 1983): 325.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 326.

of the Augsburg Confession in 1749, the Moravian Church was recognized as part of the Saxon state church.⁶⁹

The Moravian church did have its blemishes in its history. Theological anomalies crept into the church as well as some *adiaphora* (or things indifferent, which do not compromise the conscience nor endanger salvation⁷⁰) that went contrary to traditional orthodox theology. Certain morbid emphases were placed on the death and the wounds of Jesus Christ. This and other cultural anomalies of the community caused concern in the Pietist community. These anomalies worked themselves out and the Moravians today refer to this as “the sifting time.”⁷¹

The Moravian church had as rich hymnody with several hymns (reputed to be over two thousand) written by Zinzendorf. The influence of this church can be seen in the many hymns, composed by John Wesley,⁷² who translated some of Zinzendorf’s hymns. This tradition is also carried out within the Evangelical Covenant Church with hymns composed in the Pietist manner.

⁶⁹ See Walker, Williston, Norris, Richard, Lotz, David, Handy, Robert. *A History of the Christian Church*. 4th ed. (New York: Charles Schibner’s Sons, 1985), 592-596.

⁷⁰ Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA Hendrickson Publishing, 2002), 8:604.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 595.

⁷² John Wesley translated some of Zinzendorf’s hymns and published them in a book *Hymns and Sacred Poems*.

Chapter 2.

Swedish Pietism and Immigration to America

Influences

Carolinians

The start of the Eighteenth-century found Sweden and Russia battling in the Great Northern War (1700-1721). In this war, the soldiers of Charles XII (also called Karl XII) were called the Carolinians. They fought at the Battle of Poltava in which the Swedish army was thoroughly defeated, with thousands killed and thousands taken prisoner. The Carolinian prisoners were then forced into labor in the building the city of St. Petersburg on territory formally possessed by Sweden. While in the Siberian prisons, the hymns of Pietism were heard, and the missionaries to Russia shared with them the first kernels of Pietist thought that the Swedes would hear.

German Pietism crept across the border into Russia, and it was here that these Carolinian prisoners were taught how to search the Scriptures, the value of prayer and the wonderful hymnody of the Pietists. One of the Carolinians to return to Sweden after the war was a Swedish Army Lieutenant Colonel Per Cedersparre. Illustrative of the conditions within Sweden and the state church, is the reaction to Cedersparre and his friends gathering at the home in Sickla. On their way to the town of Nacka, Cedersparre and his friend stopped at a home in Sickla where after dinner they gathered for prayer and hymn singing. This small group or conventicle started a controversy within the church and state. The pastor of the church in Nacka filed charges with the local authorities against Cedersparre and his friends.

This charge was elevated all the way to the Crown, and a royal commission was formed in November of 1723 and lasted until April 1725.

During this investigation the defendants were accused of moral impropriety as a French merchant heard sighing and screaming from the members. The term *svärmeri* (from the German *Schwärmerei*) was used for these people meaning a religious enthusiasm or fanaticism. Charges were brought of violating various conventicle prohibitions and from deviating from the “pure evangelical faith.”⁷³ The result of this controversy was a more formalized prohibition of conventicles in the form of the Conventicle Act of 1726. Britt Hallqvist in an article about his libretto to the opera *Captive and Free* writes about the Conventicle Act:

It was the Conventicle Act that first made his religious activities more difficult. Here perhaps one needs to explain what the Conventicle Act was. As the Nordic encyclopedia says, ‘The Conventicle Act was written by the leadership of the Nordic churches as a way to obstruct the growth of the separatistic movements that could have destroyed the Lutheran unity of the respective countries.’⁷⁴

Conventicles were meetings by lay people to discuss Scripture, sing hymns and pray. Conventicle Acts were passed in many European countries including England in 1664 and Norway in 1741, all with the expressed purpose protecting orthodoxy but practically limiting religious freedom. In some cases groups were limited to five people or less in a home. This affected the Pietists, Quakers and others who were trying to gather away from the state churches.

⁷³ Britt G. Hallqvist, “A word from one of the authors of ‘Captive and Free,’” *Augsburg Now* 60, no. 1. (Fall 1997): 25.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Fines of 200 risdalar was imposed for the first offense of these assemblies.

Per Cedarsparre was tried and found guilty of violating the Conventicle Act, but not of heresy in regard to the pure evangelical faith. The king granted Cedersparre a pardon, but warned him that future violations would result in a harsh punishment.

The Carolinian soldiers who returned with this new fire spread Pietist thought throughout the country. Soon conventicles were being formed, studying Scripture, singing hymns, discussing sermons and praying. At the same time, members of the Moravian Church began to enter Sweden.

Moravian Influence

The history of the Moravian Church is briefly examined in the above section, but their influence on the Swedish people needs to be more fully explored. It was through Swedish craftsmen who were called to work at Herrnhut and then returned to Sweden that the Moravian influence first entered Sweden. Zinzendorf himself came to Sweden in May of 1735, but it was more through his writings that this form of Pietism caught on. The middle of the eighteenth-century saw a push in Sweden by the Moravians. Missionaries from Herrnhut entered the country, and under orders from Zinzendorf, worked with the local pastors to bring the Moravian Pietism to the local churches.

Zinzendorf makes a distinction between Pietism and Moravians:
The former generally has his misery constantly before his eyes and looks only for his needed justification to the wounds of Jesus; the latter has the ongoing atonement and the blood of Christ constantly before his eyes, and only now and then for needful humiliation casts a glance at his misery.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Karl A. Olsson, *By One Spirit* (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1962), 651. Olsson's translation of Pleijel's *Herrnhutismen*.

The result of the Moravian missionaries' work was a revival of sorts in the northern parts of the country. In northern Skåne province, revivals were taking place in the marketplace, but in southern Skåne there was no such revival.⁷⁶

Scottish Free Church

In reaction to the events of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, i.e. the French Revolution, Romanticism, and rationalism, there was a spiritual revival within the British Isles. This revival came to Scotland by way of the Haldane brothers, Robert and James, who were laymen that became active organizers in furthering the revival that was beginning in Scotland. This movement, called the Evangelical party had a champion in Glasgow named Thomas Chalmers who was an accomplished preacher, teacher, and social reformer. Under his leadership in 1843, 474 ministers, a third of the ministers and churches ceded from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and formed the Free Church of Scotland in the Great Disruption.

It was even before the formalization of the Scottish Free Church that missionaries from Scotland entered Sweden. John Patterson and Ebenezer Henderson came to Sweden, aligned themselves with the Moravians already in the country, and organized the Evangelical Society to distribute tracts and Bibles. They helped organize the Göteborg Bible Society in 1813, and the Swedish Bible Society in 1815 in cooperation with the British and Foreign Bible Society. These organizations

⁷⁶ Herrnhut revival was widespread throughout the northern provinces

printed and distributed Bibles to Swedish homes, where “there had been an appalling dearth of Bibles in Swedish homes.”⁷⁷

The Free Church of Scotland fought in Sweden against the Conventicle Act until finally in 1858 the Act was repealed. The influence of the Free Church of Scotland was felt in the revival of within the church in Sweden. By the 1840’s there was a division forming between the Evangelicals or *läsare* (readers) and the state church. These Evangelicals became dissatisfied with the established church and sought to become the true church in Sweden.

Carl Axel Torén, a professor at the University of Uppsala and dean of the Cathedral, went on a tour of England, Germany and Scotland in 1848-49. While there he became acquainted with the Scottish Free Church and became enamored with the “comprehensive worship” of the church, the Presbyterian polity and saw that as the model for the Swedish national church. One area of disagreement with the Scottish Free Church was in the area of the sacraments. He believed that the Lutheran view of the sacraments led to a deeper means of grace and was more complete. Torén also saw a biblical literalism in the Free Church that he questioned. Despite these differences Torén saw the direction of the church and considered it a viable option for the Swedish church.

James Lumsden, a friend of Torén was a pastor of a church in Aberdeen, and had an interest in the spiritual condition of Sweden through his friend. Lumsden sent books about the religious life in Scotland to Sweden, supported the translation of English books into Swedish, participated in a conference on the religious freedom in Sweden, and wrote a book *Sweden: Its Religious Life and Prospects: With Some Notices of Revivals and Presentations*

⁷⁷ Emmet E Eklund, “The Scottish Free Church and its Relation to Nineteenth-Century Swedish and Swedish-American Lutheranism,” *Church History* 51 (1982): 405-418.

Which Are at Present Taking Place in That Country. His greatest contribution to the Evangelical movement in Sweden was in the role he played in forming the *Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen*; National Evangelical Foundation. This Foundation “allowed extensive lay participation and distribution of Christian colporteurs, although both of these practices previously had been frowned upon by the state church.”⁷⁸

Unlike Scotland, Sweden did not rupture due to religious differences. In 1855 there was some discussion about a division, but with the repeal of the Conventicle Act in 1856, the Pietists were able to work within the Lutheran church to effect change. There were, however, groups that did formally split from the national church. The Baptists, Methodists and Moravians formed their own church.

No doubt the combination of the vitality of the pietistic revival, the relaxation of the restrictions of the Conventicle Act, and continuing dissatisfaction with Lutheran orthodoxy stimulated this non-Lutheran growth. Even so, the Lutheran church in Sweden was not ruptured as was the Presbyterian Church in Scotland.⁷⁹

While the polity and confessional standards of the Swedish Lutheran church did not change, the “contributions of the Scottish Free Church to the church in Sweden were considerable.”⁸⁰

Leaders

George Scott

Credited for being the most influential of the “outside” evangelists and leaders, Scott brought his English Wesleyanism to Sweden in 1830. Scott came to Sweden under the auspice of industrialist Samuel Owen who considered it essential to have an English preacher for his workers in Sweden. While there, Scott quickly learned Swedish and began to preach

⁷⁸ Ibid., 411.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 412.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 412.

to Swedish workers, as well as British. Holding meetings in the Garden pavilion of Count de Geer on Kungsholmen, Scott gained members to the point where the local authorities began to be concerned. His meetings in Swedish were in violation of the Conventicle Acts of 1726, which forbade outsiders from holding religious services. But, with Scott's influential friends, he remained free to preach at the pavilion.

Scott found Sweden to be dead spiritually. He wrote after only a few weeks in the country:

Christian experience seems utterly disregarded in this country; an empty uninfluential form is the highest object at which they aim

The Lutheran Church, by all accounts I can get, is fast asleep if not dead; the Priesthood has become worldly, sensual and mercenary, the ordinances are neglected and experimental Religion is unknown.

I had such a view of the awful dead formality into which the whole of Stockholm Priests and people is sunk, that I was constrained to groan deeply on their account.

There is such an utter want of Spirituality – such a miserable ignorance of experimental Religion – such a disposition of worldly-mindedness and pursuit of several pleasures – such an evident dread lest the subjects of the Gospel should be hinted at outside the place of worship.⁸¹

Such was the state of Sweden in which Scott came to minister.

One area where Scott focused his concern was in the area of temperance. Scott organized the temperance movement with Robert Baird, an American, and the Reverend P. Wieselgren, a local pastor with a fire to preach against the evils of drink. The national temperance society was organized under Scott on February 11, 1837 with assistance from the above mentioned and P.G. Ahnfelt, brother of Oscar Ahnfelt the hymn writer. Brännvin, which means “burnt wine” is any alcoholic beverage made from potatoes or grain and can be flavored or unflavored, and was becoming an epidemic in Sweden. Alcoholism was growing, possibly due to the economic and social conditions, and men such as Scott and Rev.

⁸¹ George M. Stephensen, *Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration: A Study of Immigrant Churches* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932), 8.

Wieselgren spoke passionately against this growing sin. Scott was one of few who adhered to the policy of total abstinence when it came to drink.

As mentioned in Scott's writing, the clergy were also a great concern to him. He saw a lack of commitment and deep spirituality in the priesthood of the state Lutheran church.

Scott and other läsare and lay men:

Denied that "official" religion should be the monopoly of men who had been through the theological mill devised by the state and had been regularly ordained and installed in office. They believed that in order to be admitted into fellowship with the "true believers," the parish pastor must radiate a living faith by renouncing worldly things.⁸²

Scott brought about a revival in the church in Sweden, in part due to his ability to make friends and influence people. He became friends with members of the aristocracy in the Riksdag, and with the press. His ability to raise funds also did him well. On one trip to America in 1840-1, Scott raised enough money to free his new building from debt and have sufficient funds to start his paper the *Pietisten*. The *Pietisten*, founded by Scott was continued by C.O. Rosenius, and then by P.P. Waldenström.

While Scott did have a large following and friends in high places, there was a certain element within Sweden who viewed him as a menace. As stated prior, there were certain members of the ruling party who saw Scott and his work as a violation of the Conventicle Act and tried to have him removed under that law. There was also resistance to Scott and his work from the liberal press who stirred the citizens of Stockholm to resist Scott's temperance movement. Emotions were stirred and on "Palm Sunday, April 20, 1842... a mob gathered menacingly outside the English Church and proceeded to break up the service."⁸³ Scott's

⁸² Ibid., 8.

⁸³ Olsson, 46.

enemies and the press succeeded in driving him out of the country on April 30, 1842. The *Pietisten*, founded by Scott was continued by C.O. Rosenius, and then by P.P. Waldenström.

Carl Olaf Rosenius

Carl Olaf Rosenius was a layman whose name G. Everett Arden calls “among the very greatest in the annals of the Swedish Lutheran Church ... no other man since the Reformation who exerted a greater, deeper, and more permanent influence upon the Swedish people than the late evangelist, Carl Olaf Rosenius.”⁸⁴

Born in the parsonage of Luleå on February 3, 1816 to Anders and Sarah Rosenius, and the third of seven children, Carl was a child of the revival movement. His father Anders was an ordained minister in the Church of Sweden who himself had strong pietistic leanings. Anders was well respected as a pastor and preached often a message of repentance. Carl was a serious young man who was brought up in a household with daily conversations in religion, prayer, and Bible study. His father led the conventicle sessions, prayer meetings and other gatherings for the church members.

Being this serious-minded young man, Carl considered thoughtfully about being an ordained pastor in the Church of Sweden. In a literary interview with the new *Pietisten*, Carl tells of an occasion where, just as Gideon laid out his fleece before the Lord, Carl tested God’s desire for Carl to go into ministry, and even God’s existence:

The test I devised was to see if I could walk blindfolded from a spot back of the barn to the corner of the granary. If I arrived at the corner of the granary, I would know that God existed and had guided my steps. So, kerchief tightly in place, I set out on an adventure which would decide the big question for me.

⁸⁴ G. Everett Arden, *Four Northern Lights: Men Who Shaped Scandinavian Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 117.

Q: How did it come out?

A: Well, I had only gone a short distance when I was overcome by an unspeakable anguish—it was as though an invisible arm stopped me dead in my tracks. When I took off my blindfold, I was at the very edge of a deep, open well. One more step and I would have fallen in!⁸⁵

This was not the deciding instance for Carl. His decision to accept the Lord was when he was fifteen and he read a book entitled *Mirror of Faith* by Bishop Erik Pontoppidan. In this book, he read about spiritual truths about what each person should do.

The Church of Sweden at this time was in its dark days. In Sweden there was drinking of *brännvin*, dancing, worldliness and theaters. Even the clergy were not exempt from the culture. They preached, as Carl says in this interview, “about the value of honesty, thrift, how to raise cattle, care for the soil, live a good life, prosper and so on.”⁸⁶ Clergy, being paid by the State, became more like record keepers than pastors. It was the duty of the pastor to keep records of the families in his area; births, deaths and marriages were all reported to the State. Laymen who wanted to preach about repentance were at best discouraged, or at worst, accused by the clergy and arrested under the Conventicle Law of 1726 which prohibited all private devotional gatherings.

It was in these circumstances that the rural people would meet surreptitiously to study the Bible, to read the devotional writings of Luther, Arndt, and Nohrberg. They would read the liturgy of the church, sing from the *Psalmbok*, and close their meetings with a “calling down upon themselves, their pastor, and their church, the benediction of almighty God.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Lindahl. Interview With Carl Olof Rosenius. *Pietisten*, Volume XIV, Number 2 (Summer 1999). <http://www.pietisten.org/summer99/rosenius.html> (accessed August 17, 2007).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Arden, 118.

These meetings were led by lay people, called colporteurs, or in the case of Carl's father Anders, by the pastor.

The first half of the nineteenth-century was one of revival in Sweden and there were some men who became prominent in the movement. Men like Henric Schartau who was a pastor in the city of Lund had a widespread influence on the western and southern regions of Sweden. Peter Lorentz Sellergren and Peter Nyman had a similar influence in the Småland. These men would preach the Law and the moral demands of God. In Lappland, a "strange and eccentric" pastor Lars Laestadius was stirring the revival movement. All these men taught and preached a revival that included moral regeneration and temperance.

During this revival period Carl Olaf was growing and developing. He and his family moved to Safvar and he and his brother Anton were sent to school in Umeå where they learned along with the usual subjects, the Word of God and the writings of Martin Luther. Then Carl Olaf graduated and went to the *Gymnasium* in Härnösand to become a pastor. In his third year there he gave his first sermons on "long Friday" and Easter, in 1836. These sermons were not well received by the parish pastor. Rosenius' use of the common dialect and his content were criticized. "He criticized the content also because I encouraged people to become one with Christ. He said that was 'mystical fanaticism.'"⁸⁸

After graduating from the *Gymnasium*, Rosenius attended the University of Uppsala in 1838 and left in 1839 because of poor health, serious doubts about his faith and abilities, and financial reasons. When he left the University of Uppsala, Rosenius became acquainted with George Scott (discussed above). Scott had heard the young Rosenius lead a Bible study and saw the promise in this young man. Scott hired him to his American foreign missionary society. This was the beginnings of his employment

⁸⁸ Lindahl.

as a lay evangelist, working in the city of Stockholm in the Bethlehem Chapel. Being employed as such gave Rosenius the freedom to travel about the country spreading the revival message to all of Sweden. It was during the early part of his association with Scott that they started the monthly magazine called the *Pietisten*, which in some form exists even today.

Rosenian revival depended on the three C's: Colporteur, Conventicle, and Conversion. The colporteur was the lay preacher who while not ordained by the Church had authority in his convictions for a new life in Christ and in the moral suasion over the established clergy. It was these colporteurs that led the way in the revival movement; leading Bible studies, prayer meetings and preaching. The colporteur prior to the 1840's was rare due to the lack of formal education of the peasantry. The Educational Reform Act changed this. This act changed the way that people were educated. Prior to the Act in 1842 the task of educating the public was left to the parish pastor. Under this Act, schools are being formed to teach teachers. The general public now has access to quality education which allows the average person to be able to read. This was instrumental in the revival movement; colporteurs are being educated, learning to read Scripture for themselves and being able to lead studies on the Bible and on the writings of Luther and others.

Conversion was highly placed on the list of Rosenian revival theology. As with Pietism in general there is need for conversion, not just assent to a God who is Creator, but to a stressing of the emotional aspects of a personal conversion. Along with this conversion of the heart was a conversion of one's life. No longer is it acceptable to attend Mass on Sunday and drink brännvin the rest of the week. "It was moralistic –

indeed, often puritanical and legalistic – in its insistence upon sanctification as corollary with justification in terms of a disciplined self-denying amendment of life. It conceived of Christianity as praxis rather than as assent to doctrine.”⁸⁹ This change of life and of heart may be attributed to the book that caused his conversion *The Mirror of Faith*. In a letter of Rosenius that was published in the Spring 2000 issue of the *Pietisten*, he writes of the conversion of your life, that once your sins are forgiven there is a new desire to live righteously:

Yes, though your sins are blood red, as in Isaiah 1:18, they shall be white as snow. Take all of God’s Gospel as help and refresh your soul abundantly so that you become completely certain that you, nevertheless, are God’s child. Despite all your wickedness, God never keeps track of your sin. Then you will obtain new desire and power to destroy sin, wrath, and impatience. Repair your real errors and keep better watch in the future. But take care to do this on conditions of faith so that you do not sink down again in your wretchedness.⁹⁰

The conventicle, the third C in the Rosenian triad of revival, is that meeting, usually held in the home of the colporteur, to study the Word of God, to pray and to sing songs. However, the conventicles of Rosenius were different from those of the earlier Pietistic period. In the Methodist prayer meeting, there was witnessing by those who were gathered, but when Rosenius led a conventicle, he led the reading, the prayer and the benediction. These were truly leader led meetings. Karl Ollson notes in his book *By One Spirit*, that these conventicles irked the established Church and government. He points to four areas in which these meetings were discouraged: 1) It violated the office of the church; 2) It violated the church principle of place; 3) It violated the

⁸⁹ Arden, 127.

⁹⁰ Carl Olof Rosenius, “A Letter of Carl Olof Rosenius,” *Pietisten*. (Spring 2000), XV, no 1, <http://www.pietisten.org/spring00/rosenius.html> (accessed August 17, 2007).

accepted form of public worship; 4) they did not recognize the sanctities of social structure.⁹¹

P.P. Waldenström

The most influential of the theologians, Peter Paul Waldenström spanned the continents, making his theology part of the Swedish Mission Covenant in both Sweden and America. Born in the city of Lulea, July 20, 1838, Waldenström studied at the University of Uppsala where he received his Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1863. It was his hearing of an Easter sermon by Rosenius in 1859 that the Pietist stirrings were first felt even though he was raised in a strict Lutheran home. From that point the relationship between the two giants solidified as teacher and disciple which was to last until Rosenius' death in 1868 taking over the editorship of the *Pietisten*.

Waldenström's book, *Squire Adamson*, which placed him as one of the leaders in Pietist thought, was published as a serial first and then in book form. This allegorical story hits several key points with which Waldenström takes exception. In the story, Waldenström lashes out at scientific and philosophical inquiry, theological education and the established church; the first because of its' seemingly detriment to pietistic views, the second because seminaries teach dead orthodoxy and the third because of the lack of true religion within the church.⁹²

Squire Adamson planted Waldenström firmly in the camp of the Rosenians, those followers of Rosenius but also within a newer group who were more democratized, pragmatic and held a higher view of the laity. As noted previously, there

⁹¹ Karl Olson, *By One Spirit* (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2002), 52-53.

⁹² For a detailed examination of *Squire Adamson* see Karl Olson, *By One Spirit* (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2002), 106-108.

was a unique relationship between Rosenius and Waldenström. There was much agreement between the two men, but Waldenström took Rosenian thought to a higher plane. Where Rosenius was very careful not to appear separatist, his disciple did not hesitate to mix theology with politics in his writing and his speaking. Rosenius adhered strictly to biblical foundations rather than to confessions and creeds of man and Waldenström took this to the extreme, almost nullifying all the confession's creeds. This extreme view endeared him to the far left of the läsare leading the separatist charge.

Waldenström's extreme views came to the fore in a sermon that he wrote for the 20th Sunday after Trinity, 1872, which was never given but was published in the *Pietisten*. In this sermon Waldenström lays out his theory of the atonement.⁹³ In this sermon Waldenström argues five points for his theory:

Here comes now the kingdom of God in the gospel with another message, which brings to naught all human speculation and renders the wisdom of the wise foolishness, teaching (1) that through the fall no change has entered the heart of God, (2) that because of this it was no severity or anger against man which through the fall rose up in the way of man's redemption, (3) that the change that occurred with the fall was a change in man alone, in that he became sinful and thus fell away from God and from the life which is in him, (4) that for this reason an atonement indeed is needed for man's salvation, not an act of atonement that appeases God and presents him as being once again gracious, but one that removes man's sin and makes him once again righteous, and (5) that this atonement is Jesus Christ.⁹⁴

Waldenström expounds his theory in a pamphlet *On the Meaning of the Atonement* where he continues where his *Pietisten* article left off.

⁹³ The complete sermon can be found in Glenn P. Anderson's book *Covenant Roots*.

⁹⁴ Glenn P. Anderson, ed. *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations, 2nd ed.*, (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 106.

His main emphasis here, as in what he was to produce subsequently, was that man, not God, was the object of the atonement. God was the initiator, not the recipient, of the work of reconciliation in Christ.⁹⁵

Traditionally, the Church's doctrine was one of *satisfactio vicaria*, that Christ's suffering and death was a means of satisfying the wrath of an angry God. Anselm (d. 1109) first wrote about this in his *Cur Deus Homo*, and had been the doctrine of atonement since then. This doctrine of penal-substitution states that man is required to satisfy this debt for sin, but is so far beyond what a sinful man is able to do, that God sent His Son, as a sinless son of Adam, to satisfy the debt. In this way God's mercy and justice are served at the same time. Anselm writes:

When we were considering God's justice and man's sin, God's mercy seemed to you to vanish. But we have found how great it really is, and how it is in such harmony with his justice that it cannot be conceived to be greater or more just. For, indeed, what greater mercy could be imagined, than for God the Father to say to the sinner, condemned to eternal torments, and without any power of redeeming himself from them, "Receive my only-begotten Son, and give him for yourself," and for the Son himself to say, "Take me and redeem yourself"? For they as much as say this when they call us and draw us to the Christian faith. And what could be more just, than for Him to whom the price more valuable than every debt is paid to forgive every debt (if the price is given with the right disposition)?⁹⁶

Clearly, Waldenström's atonement theory differed from the traditional view, but he was not alone. In 1869, a professor at the University of Uppsala, O.F. Myrberg, wrote a piece called *The Scriptural Doctrine of the Atonement*. Influenced by J.T. Beck and Sören Kierkegaard, Myrberg's wrote that justification comes not by imputation but by man's appropriating it. He also stressed Christ's personality over His suffering and

⁹⁵ Olsson, 111.

⁹⁶ Anselm: "Why God Became Man," in Eugene R. Fairweather, ed., *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. 1956), 181.

death. Other theologians of the time were also joining the fray that Waldenström was seen as chief.⁹⁷

Waldenström continued to study and write on justification and the atonement. In 1874 he published a dissertation titled *De Justificatione* in Latin. Though there was a only small number published, the effects of this dissertation were huge. In it, Waldenström assails the confessions of the Church and traditional teaching of theology. This denial of effectiveness of theological study brought about a phrase used by Waldenström, which became the catch phrase of the Evangelical Covenant Church: “Where is it written?”

It is paradoxical that Waldenström’s deceptively simple method, “*Var står det skrivet?*” should be responsible for both immediate theological debate and ultimate withering of theological interest. This, nevertheless, is a fact. Waldenström had proposed a method to end all methods. What was to follow among Waldenströmians was not an interest in the larger theological areas, which had been vital to the church from the beginning, but fanciful and often arid speculation.

Waldenström continued with his development of the atonement, and in 1875 proposed that Christ’s death was not atonement for the world but atonement takes place when the sinner accepts God’s gift of grace. There is a lessening of the emphasis on Christ’s work on the cross and more on the personality of Christ. This is similar to Myrberg’s theory.

The result of Waldenström’s theory was an increased understanding and accessibility to the läsare. Without the traditional theological doctrines, the concepts

⁹⁷ For an in-depth article on Waldenström’s theory of atonement see David Gustafson’s article “J.G. Princlle and the Waldenströmian View of the Atonement,” in *Trinity Journal* 20, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 191.

that seem vague and lofty, and the confessions of the Church, Waldenström's method made understanding God's gift of grace accessible to more people. While this was not without controversy, thousands supported him.

Others

Mentioned earlier in relation to his temperance movement leading brother, Oscar Ahnfelt was the hymn writer of the Swedish Pietist movement. Influenced strongly by the Moravian hymnody, Ahnfelt drew on the *Psalmbok* and the *Songs of Zion*, Moravian hymnals. Ahnfelt used his musical abilities, his voice and compositional talents in conjunction with his preaching abilities. This combination made him very successful in drawing large crowds to his services. His first set of twelve songs was published in 1850 entitled *Spiritual Songs with Accompaniment for Pianoforte and Guitar*. Other sets were to be released for the next twenty-seven years, with a total output of two hundred songs. Ahnfelt used traditional folk tunes adapted for religious use, but did not write the lyrics to his songs.

Swedish hymns played an integral part in the conventicles of the Swedish Pietists. Lina Sandell stands out as Sweden's most prolific and popular of the hymnists. Born in 1832, Lina began her hymn writing early, but it was in reaction to a personal tragedy that her output increased. When Lina was twenty six years old, she witnessed the death of her father as he fell overboard on a ferry to Gothenburg. Lina used thus tragic event to produce some of the most poignant hymns written. In her Children of the Heavenly Father, Lina channels her grief into this hymn:

Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;

Nestling bird nor star in Heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish,
In His holy courts they flourish;
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Praise the Lord in joyful numbers,
Your Protector never slumbers;
At the will of your Defender
Ev'ry foeman must surrender.

Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy.⁹⁸

So popular were Lina's hymns that the "Swedish nightingale" Jenny Lind sang her hymns internationally.

Swedish National Church

From its inception, the National Church in Sweden has never really been separated from the government. Starting with King Erik Knutsson's appointment as bishop in 1210, the Swedish king has been considered divinely appointed to lead both church and state. This is a relatively rapid movement of church state union as

⁹⁸ Karolina. Sandell, "Children of the Heavenly Father," in *The Covenant Hymnal: A Worship Book*. (Chicago: Covenant Publications. 1996), 87.

Christianity had not reached Sweden until 829 and the first king to be a Christian was in 1164.⁹⁹

Sweden broke with the Catholic Church in the 1520's and officially declared Lutheranism as the official religion at the Convention of Uppsala in 1593 at the convention held in the city of Uppsala in the southern part of Sweden

In the seventeenth century, the state/church union became complete, when the Church Law, enacted in 1686, made Christianity the state religion. Sweden broke with the Catholic Church in the 1520s and officially declared Lutheranism as the official religion at the Convention of Uppsala in 1593, with the Book of Concord as official church doctrine. The Convention of Uppsala did not prohibit other religions from practicing, but they had to do so in their homes. This was later amended by Conventicle Act of 1726.¹⁰⁰

This Church Law of 1686 made the church into a functionary of the state, recording births, deaths, marriages and divorces and the reporting this information to the state. Because of this diligence in recording membership information in the *husförhörslängd*, or clerical survey there is an accurate record of nineteenth century Sweden's population growth and movement.

The Church Law as stated above made Sweden into a confessing evangelical state and solidified the Crown's authority in church matters. The monarch was then responsible not only for state law but for God's law too. All citizens of Sweden were now by law part of

⁹⁹ For a history of the National Church of Sweden refer to the Svenska Kyrkan web site at http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/ArticlePages/200508/16/20050816074732_svkhs419/20050816074732_svkhs419.dbp.asp. (accessed June 4, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ James Pylant, in his article Swedish Research: A Case Study in *GenealogyMagazine.com*. 2004. <http://www.genealogymagazine.com/swrecast.html>. (accessed June 4, 2007), states that Sweden ranks as one of the best for genealogical research because of the laws requiring clergy to keep records.

the Swedish National Church. Resident aliens in the country were able only to worship according to their religion in private homes. This law was eventually replaced more than three hundred years later by the Ecclesiastical Act of 1992, and the section of the law that made all natural born citizens members of the National Church was overturned in 1996, and total separation of church and state became law in 2000.

Abuses within the national church system can be seen on both sides of the pulpit and on both sides of the governmental line. On the clergy side, priests were sometimes lazy, uneducated men who became clergy at the prompting of parents or for security of employment. Theological education was at a minimum, and the sermons showed it. It was the Pietist influence that caused the clergy to begin to preach the Gospel with enthusiasm and conviction. Scott's comments, as recorded above, illustrate the depths to which the Swedish clergy had fallen. His observation of the clergy being mercenary, worldly and sensual, with the Lutheran Church being asleep if not dead is the result of state appointed pastorates. When the position of pastor becomes a government job, the spiritual care of the congregation suffers.

In reaction to the poor pastoring by state appointed clergy, the congregation fell into spiritual decline. If the pastor does not preach the Gospel enthusiastically, intelligently and sternly, the congregation does not respond, thus begins the downward spiral of the church. With poor pastoring, there is poor spiritual development within the congregation, which then leads to men who enter the ministry for the wrong reasons, which leads to more poor preaching and teaching. It is little wonder that Scott would make such critical comments.

With the clergy/congregation interaction, there was the clergy/state interaction. As mentioned above the clergy was to maintain records of all the parishioners, with yearly visits

to each household. During these visits the clergy would record births, deaths, marriages, divorces, new members and members that had moved out of the area. This annual event, called “*husförhör*” or “house examination” changed in the 19th century from a clerical survey to parish record called “*församlingsbok*.”¹⁰¹

Abuses of this system are clear. Part of the visit was to ensure that all people over the age of fifteen received Communion at least once per year and attended Mass once per year, if not, there was a fine levied against the offending party. This fine was collected by the state, not by the church. There were fees that were collected during the annual visitation, fees for clerical services and tithes. Another reason for the state to know who, what and where within the parishes, was to keep records of all males of military age. These men were to be taught how to read, and then be available for service to the country. The record keeping was not equitable in its accuracy:

Often people of the highest social class - the nobility - were not entered into this roll because they were considered above the communion control. The nobility enjoyed certain privileges that the clergy (*präster*), burghers (*borgare*), and farmers (*bonder*) did not, and this was one privilege.¹⁰²

Social, economic conditions of Sweden in the nineteenth-century

Sweden at the time of this new revival in the evangelical church, was a agrarian society. In 1870 over seventy two percent of the population worked the land. The problem was that the population of the country doubled in between 1750 and 1850 but the number of farms increased by only ten percent. This rapid population surge caused new problems for the country. New classes of people were developing.

¹⁰¹ June Pelo, *Clerical Survey. Swedish-Finn Historical Society*. http://sfhs.eget.net/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=85&Itemid=2 (accessed June 4, 2007).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Farms were being divided to the point that it became difficult for many farms to turn a profit.

The new classes of workers were divided into those who owned the land and those who did not. The landed class was the gentry, the peasants and a division called the crofters. These crofters were those who leased crofts, or small parcels of land to work. The landless were the cotters, those who occupied a house but did not own or work the land except for a small potato patch. These cotters would work the farm of the land owner. The non-landed could become a hired hand or *dräng* and was confined to the restrictions of his trade or lastly he could become a *statare* who would give all his energies into the estate in exchange for food and shelter for himself and his family. This class of people, the working poor, became an increasingly large sector of the population. Poverty was becoming an increase concern within Sweden.

Over the nineteenth-century the agrarian economy of Sweden went through quite dramatic changes. Commercialization and structural change in the agrarian sector also brought changes in the organization of labor, with married servants (*statare*) replacing the life-cycle servants of the past. Thus, from being a phase of life the servants turned into a social group of their own; with the important difference that they now got the opportunity to marry and form a household (Lundh 1999a). During the nineteenth-century being a servant also became more and more connected to downward social mobility. For peasant children, who went into service, it became more and more difficult to later attain the social status of their parents, thereby contributing to the process of proletarianization taking place in this period (Lundh 1999a, Winberg 1975). Thus, in the second half of the nineteenth-century, the classical servant institution, where a majority of children from all social groups spent at least some time as living in servants before getting married, yielded to a new system in which service became something people remained in for life.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Martin, Dribe, Christer Lundh, *People on the Move. Determinants of Servant Migration in Nineteenth Century Sweden*. Department of Economic History. Lund University, Sweden. Paper delivered at the International Economic History Association, XIIIth World Congress, Buenos Aires, July 22-26, 2002. <http://eh.net/XIIICongress/cd/papers/29DribeLundh326.pdf> (accessed June 6, 2007).

Increased poverty meant increased illiteracy. With the poor working longer hours, and starting to work younger, literacy was down. In reaction to this failing educational system, the above mentioned Church Act mandated that the parish minister should teach reading to his parishioners. Using the Bible as the primary tool for teaching reading, the literacy rate increased through this effort. A side effect of this learning was that the common man was starting to read non-religious material, questioning the existence of God and the veracity religion.

After the middle of the nineteenth-century, Sweden was undergoing a great social change. The liberal and socialist movements had entered from the European mainland. The Enlightenment idea of natural law had already considerable ground in the political consciousness of the time. This became obvious in the Instrument of Government of 1809, which gave support to the idea that an individual's conscience is a better guide in religious matters than either state or society.¹⁰⁴

The result of this impoverished and uneducated population was an increase in alcoholism. *Bränvin* consumption was growing, and as a result families were suffering. As mentioned above the conditions were so alarming that there was a temperance movement led by Reverend P. Wieselgren. He organized temperance societies with the assistance of P.G. Ahnfelt and J.H. Thomander. But alcohol was a source of income for a poor populace. If a farmer could grow the potatoes and grains needed for this drink, he could earn more in the open market. Even the parish pastor relied on the sales of alcohol to support the church. Resistance to the abolition of alcohol was fierce, but that did not discourage these leaders. These societies grew with the help of other pastors preaching against the use of alcohol. The

¹⁰⁴ Jonas Alwall, "Religious Liberty in Sweden: An Overview," *Journal of Church and State*, 42, no.1 (Winter 2000): 150.

combination of the Lutheran Wieselgren, the Wesleyan Scott and the American Presbyterian Baird proved the evangelical church was united in this fight.¹⁰⁵

The temperance fight was well supported by the monarchy in Sweden. Attending the International Temperance Conference in Stockholm, June 15-17, 1846 were King Oscar I, Queen Josephine of Leuchtenberg, Crown Prince Carl (VX), Count Hamilton, Count Augustus von Hartmansdorff, Peter Wieselgren, James Berzelius.¹⁰⁶

Swedish Pietists in America and Reasons for Leaving Their Homeland

As noted above, the economic conditions of Sweden were deplorable at best for some people. They were servants with no hope of advancement in their lot for them or their sons. For others, farming on small crofts could not provide for families. Martin Dribe, Associate Professor of Economic History at University of Sweden at Lund explores how even marriages were planned such that there could be an increase in land and wealth in nineteenth-century Sweden.¹⁰⁷

As with most migration to the New World, people came seeking new opportunities to better their lives and that of their families. The lack of social mobility, the increased population of Sweden with a fixed amount of available land, conscription of the young men,

¹⁰⁵ According to Suzanne Daley, in "Europe Making Sweden Ease Alcohol Rules," *New York Times*. (March 28, 2001), there were over 175,000 distilling machines in Sweden in the mid nineteenth-century.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Lawrence Schrad, "The Prohibition Option: Transnational Temperance and National Policymaking in Russia, Sweden and the United States" *Appendix A: International Temperance Conferences*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison. 2007.
<http://www.polisci.wisc.edu/users/schrad/Appendix%20A.pdf> (accessed June 7, 2007).

¹⁰⁷ See "Finding the Right Partner: Rural Homogamy in Nineteenth-Century Sweden" published in *International Review of Social History*, 50, no 13 (2005). Dribe also has published articles on "People on the Move. Determinants of Servant Migration in Nineteenth Century Sweden" and "Dealing with Economic Stress Through Migration: Lessons from Nineteenth Century Rural Sweden" as well as other articles and books related to the economic and social conditions of Sweden in the nineteenth century on his web site at <http://www.ekh.lu.se/ekhmldr/>. (accessed February 2, 2008).

and intolerance towards political organizations such as the socialists were the “push” factors that drove the Swedes from their homeland.

Who were these immigrants in a new world? According to Timothy J. Hatton, these were men who were young; only 8% of the immigrants over 40 and 16% under 16. They were primarily male with 68% men. They were single, and they came to America without government assistance. There was a reliance on previous immigrants to assist with the cost of bringing them here. The new immigrants relied on remittances, pre-paid tickets, accommodation and subsistence upon arrival and help in searching for a job. Finally, Hatton found that the immigrants were unskilled. He attributes this to the young age at which they came. These young men had not the opportunity in their home land to learn a trade yet.¹⁰⁸

Religious freedom was also on the minds and hearts of the emigrants from Sweden. As mentioned above, the Lutheran Church was given national status by the Church Act of 1686, with little toleration for anything else. Those who strayed from the national church were subject to both imprisonment and expatriation. We have examined how the Conventicle Act of 1726 prohibited the laity from gathering in small groups (conventicles) and discussing Scripture, the week’s sermon, and praying as a group. During the middle of the nineteenth-century, restrictions loosened and the Decree on Foreign Religious Adherents of 1860, allowed the citizens to leave the national church for another “approved” congregation of Christian faith. These “approved” congregations had to be “of Christian confession and had to gain royal approval. A person could only leave the Church of Sweden to become a member of another ‘approved’ Christian congregation, and before this could be ratified, the dissenter – or ‘the apostate’, as he was legally termed—had to be instructed, exhorted, and

¹⁰⁸ Timothy J. Hatton, “What Drove the Mass Migrations from Europe in the Late Nineteenth Century?” *Population and Development Review*, 20, no. 3 (Sept 1994): 1-27.

warned about the consequences of his decision by the local Lutheran vicar and chapter.”¹⁰⁹
This Dissenter Act was modified in 1873 to eliminate the exhortation of the apostate.

Swedish Pietists as Part of the Lutheran Church in America

The immigrants to this new country brought with them both their Pietist convictions and their Swedish Lutheran background. Both were integral in the formation of the Evangelical Covenant Church. When the immigrants landed, they settled in the farmlands and cities in Chicago, St. Louis, and other major cities in what we now refer to as the mid-West and with them brought their *Psalmbok*, and Luther’s Catechism along with their Bible.

The Swedish immigrants, like their brothers in Sweden did not want to sever ties with the Lutheran Church and start a new religion or denomination. Lars Paul Esbjörn was the first leader of the American Swedish Lutherans. Born in Helsingland, Sweden in 1808, Esbjörn attended seminary at the University of Uppsala where he was the ordained as a minister in the Swedish Lutheran Church. After meeting George Scott, Esbjörn became a committed Pietist and became known as a *läsareprest* or revival preacher, but with a firm adherence to the Lutheran Church. Being a Pietist, with strong preaching against alcohol, cost Esbjörn positions in several cities. The forces within Sweden that opposed prohibition or even temperance fought the hiring of Esbjörn because of his outspokenness. With opportunities drying up in Sweden, Esbjörn joined the emigration to America in 1849.

Despite hardships in his travels (lost his wife and son to cholera) Esbjörn made his way to Andover, Illinois where he began a church in an overcrowded schoolhouse. His first service, weak from his own bout with cholera, preached from a chair on “In my weakness I

¹⁰⁹ Alwall, 151.

am strong.” By 1854, Esbjörn had grown the church to a point where on December 3 of that year a new church was dedicated with a seating of over 300. Esbjörn stayed in Andover until 1856 at which time he moved to Princeton, IL, and then to Chicago to take a professorship at the seminary at Illinois State University.

Esbjörn and the Swedish settlers were part of the Northern Illinois synod of the Lutheran Church, however, Esbjörn, along with other Scandinavian Lutherans, met in Clinton, Wis. to form the Augustana Synod in 1860 and establishing their own Augustana Theological Seminary in Chicago soon afterward.¹¹⁰ The reasons for the split from the Northern Illinois Synod, were in part due to the differences between the “confessional” and the “symbolic” Lutherans. Esbjörn and the other Scandinavian Lutherans held to a more confessional Lutheranism, in part because of Esbjörn and in part because of the financial aide given by the Old Lutheran party.

The division of the Augustana Synod from the Northern Illinois Synod was just the first of many synods in the Scandinavian Lutheran church in America. The next venture was the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Mission in the United States. This synod, with Charles Anderson leading, formed in 1872 for the purpose of:

- a) to ordain and install pastors,
- b) to license gifted men,
- c) to insure that pastors preach and administer the sacraments in accordance with Lutheran confessions, and
- d) to insure that congregations are provided with the Word and sacraments.¹¹¹

This synod was little different from the Augustana Synod.

Anderson, in his effort to raise funding for his seminary, found that the Northern Illinois Synod would not help, and the new Missions Synod that he helped form were

¹¹⁰ Karl A. Olson, Ernest Wilhelm, *History of the Swedes in Illinois* (Chicago: The Engberg-Holmberg Publishing Company, 1908), 436.

¹¹¹ Olsson, *By One Spirit*, 237.

indifferent to his project, so Anderson with help from other pastors from Keokuk and Brantford, Kansas, formed the Swedish Lutheran Ansgari Synod. This synod was confessionally akin to the Missions Synod, but with the help of James Knox of Knoxville, Illinois, Anderson got his seminary going.

Ideological Differences

Anderson and Esbjörn formed their synods in part because of ideological differences with the American Lutheran Church, including slavery, confession versus symbolism, and missions.

Slavery

As the immigrants came from Scandinavia in the 1850's and joined the Lutheran Church in America, the Swedish Pietists noted a conspicuous silence on the topic of abolition. Paul Kuenning notes:

A number of western synods, organized in the mid- 1840's and early 1850's, including Miami of Ohio, Olive Branch of Indiana, Northern Indiana, and Northern Illinois, while strongly Pietist and inclined to speak out on other moral reforms, including temperance, chose to remain silent on the subject of slavery.¹¹²

Leading the fight within the Swedish community in America was Esbjörn who believed slavery to be antithetical to Christianity. He and another Swedish Pietist Tuve N. Hasselquist, began publishing articles in his paper the *Hemlandet* on the moral issues of the day, including the condemnation of slavery, in stark contrast to the neutrality on the subject in the *Lutheran Observer*.

American Lutherans vs. Old Lutherans (Symbolists)

¹¹² Paul P. Kuenning, *The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism: The Rejection of an Activist Heritage* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), 128.

American Lutherans were those who being in this country for many years had more of an ecumenical outlook. They had contact with non-Lutheran denominations and adopted what in the eyes of the Old Lutherans, somewhat un-orthodox if not heretical practices. These “new” Lutherans adopted “Such American innovations as the Sunday School, Sabbatarianism, revivals, and prayer meetings.”¹¹³ A new requirement was instituted for membership that was unheard of in the Old Lutheran church, or in Sweden: a confession of conversion.

The Old Lutherans, those who mainly came from Germany and Scandinavia, were those who held to the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord and were very traditional in their view of church. It was these “symbolists” who recoiled from the pamphlet put out in 1855 by temperance leader S.S. Schmucker and the Lutheran Observer expressing dissatisfaction with both the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord stating that they were written by men for a specific historical period and that they do not reflect the need for “individual liberty of thought and freedom of Scriptural investigation.”¹¹⁴ This pamphlet was the breaking point in the General Synod and the forming of the Northern Illinois Synod in 1857. The other divisions of the synods are discussed above.

Missions

Because of the Moravian influence, the Swedish Pietists placed a high priority on reaching those who have not heard the name of Jesus. Beginning in Sweden, these Pietists formed societies to further the cause of missions in foreign lands. The Lutheran Mission Friends of Sweden, formed in 1878, was later the foundation of the Covenant of Sweden.

¹¹³ Olsson, 183.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 184.

Because this new organization lacked the funds to truly minister “particularly among the heathen” they partnered with the London Mission and with the Mission Synod in America.

The missions work of the Swedes in America will be discussed further in the history of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Chapter 3.

The Evangelical Covenant Church and Covenant Affirmations

A Brief History¹¹⁵

February 19, 1885, delegates from several churches gathered together at the Swedish Mission Tabernacle in Chicago, Illinois for the first meeting of The Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant Church. This organizational meeting opened with a reading of Psalm 90 and elected its first set of officers. F.M. Johnson, a pastor from Chicago used Psalm 119:63 as his opening message text “I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.”¹¹⁶ This became the overarching text of Covenant membership.

During this first session it was decided that all members of both the Mission and Ansgar synods “as well as ministers or elected delegates of churches that are in favor of or wish such an organization, be members of the meeting.”¹¹⁷ In Session IV of the meeting the name The Swedish Evangelical Missions Covenant Church was formally adopted as well as the rules for this church. This first organizational meeting lasted six days, taking Sunday off for worship, concluding on Wednesday February 25.

¹¹⁵ For a complete history of the Evangelical Covenant Church see Karl Olsson’s *By One Spirit*. It is the most complete history of the church from its’ Pietist roots until the 1960’s. He then completes the history in his two volumes set *Into One Body...by the Cross* taking it to 1985 completing the first hundred years of the ECC.

¹¹⁶ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Ps 119:63.

¹¹⁷ Glenn P. Anderson, ed, *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*, (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 8. This volume contains the original meetings minutes as well as contemporaneous accounts as reported in three of the Swedish newspapers of the day. Quote taken from the Official Minutes as published in the Missions-Vännen paper. (Translated by Fred O. Jansson).

The formation of this new denomination was in some ways unifying and in others separating. It unified the Missions and the Ansgar Synods, but by forming a denomination, certain churches, influenced by the Free Church movement, went in the direction of a non-denominational government. The relationship between the Evangelical Free Church and the Evangelical Covenant Church continued throughout the years and during the end to the twentieth-century, the churches met to talk about unification, but it ultimately proved unfruitful.

From its inception, the Evangelical Covenant Church has emphasized mercy, missions and education.

Mercy

Because many young men went to sea in Sweden rather than try to eke out a living on the rapidly decreasing parcels of land that were available, sailors held a special place in the heart of the new church. These young men found work on the steamers ferrying passengers to the New World and on cargo ships as cargo boys. Some of the ships were not as sea worthy as they were led to believe; often these young men would be lost at sea on their first voyage.

Because of the perils involved in working these ships, the Swedish Evangelical Church started homes for sailors in many port cities. This passion for the sailors was inherited by the newly formed Swedish Evangelical Covenant Church. In 1887 the Rev. Petrus Vincentius started a hospice for the sailors in Boston. Here the weary sailors would find respite from the sea with a Gospel message. By 1902, the Scandinavian Sailors' Home

was fully established at 109 Webster Street in Boston.¹¹⁸ On the West Coast the Rev. Carl Anderson was establishing a home in San Francisco.

The ministry to the poor began shortly after the establishment of the denomination. In 1886, the Covenant started the Home for Mercy in the Bowmansville area of Chicago. Karl Olsson notes “And when the Covenant held its first annual meeting in Princeton, Illinois, in September 1885, it was the city’s missionary’s burdened heart which spoke so eloquently to the assembly that it decided then and there to authorize a home of mercy.”¹¹⁹ This Home of Mercy was a bit of an orphanage, a bit old people’s home, and a bit hospital. It served all these functions from 1886 and in that year a resident doctor and nurse were added to the staff. The need for medical facilities was beyond what this first home could supply. By 1889, the need for better medical facilities was brought up at the annual meeting and was reaffirmed at the 1890 meeting. The funding was raised for this new hospital and the first Covenant hospital opened its doors in 1903.

In 1899, the decision was made to begin a nurses training program at the Home. The first graduate of this program was Hilda N. Rodberg in 1900, and the only one in the program that year. Two years later four nurses graduated and by 1906 fifteen nurses had graduated the program. The role of the Christian nurse was being defined. In the 1909 Yearbook of the Covenant Church which records the reports from the Annual Meeting it states:

The nurses are all professing Christians, and they have handled their responsibilities with enthusiasm and loyalty. Many times a sympathetic look, a word of interest, or a quiet prayer to the Great Physician is more effective than their medication. Wherefore, it is important to have those in the sick room who are themselves warmed by the love of Christ.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ The Scandinavian Sailors Home existed for many decades and today is known as The New England Seafarers Mission, 1 Black Falcon Avenue, Boston, MA 02210 <http://www.neseafarers.org> (accessed March 2, 2008).

¹¹⁹ Karl A. Olsson, *By One Spirit* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1962), 390.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 393.

Quickly outgrowing the small hospital in Bowmansville, the Covenant at the 1902 meeting funds were provided for the erection of a new hospital, and on Pentecost Sunday, 1903, a new forty room facility was dedicated. The Covenant maintains two hospitals currently. The Emanuel Medical Center in Turlock, California and Swedish Covenant Hospital are two state of the art facilities serving their communities; Emanuel since 1917 and the Swedish Covenant Hospital is the outgrowth of that first twenty bed facility that started in 1886 and the Home of Mercy.

An extension of the Home of Mercy was the need of the orphans. At the annual meeting in 1898, discussion began in regard to a separate facility to house these children. Dedicated on May 30, 1900, the Swedish Christian Children's Home in Cromwell, Connecticut became the first orphanage run by the Covenant, and in 1921 the Covenant Children's Home in Princeton, Illinois was dedicated.

The old were also cared for early in the Covenant's history. Starting in the Home of Mercy, this building became the sole facility for the aged in 1903 when the hospital separated. There were several facilities added for this demographic including those in Buffalo, Minnesota (1918), Spokane Washington (1919), Brooklyn, New York (1927) Frewsburg New York (1921) and Turlock, California (1929). The Covenant currently maintains fourteen retirement communities across the nation.

It is clear to see the Pietist influence on these early Covenanters as ministries of mercy were of such importance to Francke and his Institutes at Glauch near Halle as he describes in his *Outlines of All the Institutes at Glauch near Halle Which Provide Special Blessings Partially for the Education of Youth and Partially for the maintenance of the Poor, as the Institutes Exist in December, 1698.*

Missions

Another of the Pietist influences is the concern for the unsaved throughout the world. This was a strong emphasis of Zinzendorf and the Herrnhuters and continues to be an emphasis of the Covenant Church. Even before the Covenant was formally established in 1885, the Mission Friends of Sweden sent missionaries to Alaska, a territory of the United States since 1867, to minister to the Eskimos and Indians in that area. Working with their Swedish counterparts, the Covenant became involved in Alaska in 1887.

The Annual Meeting of 1889 saw an interest in missions in China. Through many trial and troubles, the China mission became a strong force in the country. Even during the Boxer Rebellion, which started in November of 1889 and ended in September of 1903, the Chinese spared both life and property of the Covenant missionaries. When they returned in 1903 their buildings were intact. This was not the case of other missionary efforts in the country where both buildings and lives were destroyed.

Covenant World Mission currently has over 140 missionaries in 22 countries. The missionaries serve in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and in other locations working in Chinese Ministries.¹²¹ One of the most lasting of the missions has been in the Congo. It was here that the first Covenant martyr served during the uprising of the early 1960's. Paul Carlson, a doctor who gave up his practice in California to serve those in need in the Congo became caught in the middle of a war between the official government of the Congo and the Simba rebels. These rebels tortured and ultimately killed Carlson on November 24, 1964 in

¹²¹ Evangelical Covenant Church. <http://www.covchurch.org/mission/regions> (accessed January 3, 2008).

Stanleyville. Carlson's story was featured in both Time and Life magazines where he was on the cover of both.¹²²

Education

The education of both pastors and lay men was important to the new denomination. In 1891, Annual Meeting, the decision was made to start a Covenant school. This school was to be headed by David Nyvall who was on staff at the Chicago Theological Seminary, and Axel Mellander a pastor from Mountain, Michigan. This school was intended to initially have three foci: business, a preparatory course, and a seminary. This school opened in the Fall of 1892 in Minneapolis and moved to Chicago in 1884 where it became known as North Park University. By 1894, a music department was added and the University had a total enrollment of 70 in the college and 31 in the seminary.¹²³ David Nyvall served as president until 1923 with Algoth Ohlson succeeding him in 1924.

Today, North Park University has over 2,800 students representing 39 states and 40 countries. Undergraduate majors range from Music to Nursing, Business to Engineering. North Park Theological Seminary is a fully accredited theological school that has over 1600 graduates serving in various ministries through the world.

From its foundation, the Covenant Church's three emphases of mercy, mission and education have been and continue to be consistent with Pietist thought. Francke, who emphasized education and mercy, and Zinzendorf and the Moravian Herrnhuters, with their desire to spread the Gospel to the unsaved throughout the world, inspired the early Covenanters.

¹²² For a complete biography of Paul Carlson read Lois Carlson Bridges, *Monganga Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

¹²³ Olsson, 510.

Covenant Affirmations – Compare and Contrast to Spener’s Proposals

In 1976 at the Annual Meeting, the Affirmations of the Evangelical Covenant Church were ratified by the membership. This was the first time that the beliefs and emphases of the Covenant Church were compiled into one document and voted on by the membership. In 2005, a sixth Affirmation was added to reflect the whole mission of the church. These affirmations can be seen as growing out from the Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church as written in Spener’s *Pia Desideria*. I have previously outlined these Proposals in the section on Spener and will outline the six Affirmations of the Covenant Church and their roots in Spener’s Proposals.

The Centrality of the Word of God

The Evangelical Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Bible. It confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.¹²⁴

The above statement from the Preamble to the Constitution of the Evangelical Covenant Church reflects the emphasis that the Church places on God’s Word. From the very beginnings of the denomination, God’s Word has been at the forefront of the minds and hearts of the leaders and members of the churches that became the Swedish Evangelical Mission Church. It can be seen in the official minutes of the organizational meeting that God’s Word was present along with a prayerful attitude.

Spener in his *Proposals* lists “Thought should be given to a more extensive use of the Word of God among us... The more at home the Word of God is among us, the more we

¹²⁴ “Evangelical Covenant Church Constitution and By-laws.” 2006.
<http://www.covchurch.org/cov/resources/shared/constitution--bylaws> (accessed June 23, 2007).

shall bring about faith and its fruits.”¹²⁵ In his first proposal, Spener quotes II Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” and then emphasizes the word “all” in his exposition. He writes that what is read and expounded upon in the service is not sufficient intake of the Word. He contends that all of Scripture must be read in order to receive full understanding. But he does warn that the “solitary reading” of Scripture is also not sufficient. It is the combination of individual reading and the expository sermons in the service that lead to the fullest benefit. Compare this to the first Affirmation of the Covenant Church; that “It confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God.”

What Spener advocated in his emphasis on the whole of Scripture and the Covenant’s adherence to both the Old and the New Testaments contrasts to other “denominations” that were forming about the same time as the Covenant. A glance at the tenets of different groups shows that either there is an absence of the importance of the Word in both Testaments or an addition to the Holy Scriptures as we know them.¹²⁶ While it is not unique to the Covenant Church to hold to both the Old and the New Testaments, it does reinforce what Spener wrote in his Proposals: “Accordingly *all* Scripture, without exception, should be known by the congregation if we are all to receive the necessary benefit.”¹²⁷

Spener in his third point in regards to the use of Scripture is for those who are mature in the faith, who well versed in the Bible, and who gather together for diligent study of the Word. Spener writes:

¹²⁵ Philipp Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson/Theodore G. Tappert. Eugene (OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers 2002), 87.

¹²⁶ Compare to the Church of Later Day Saints who, in addition to the Bible, consider the Book of Mormon to be on par with Scripture.

¹²⁷ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 87.

In addition to our customary services with preaching, other assemblies would also be held in the manner in which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40. One person would not rise to preach (although this practice would be continued at other times), but others who have been blessed with gifts and knowledge would also speak and present their pious opinions on the proposed subject to the judgment of the rest, doing all this in such a way as to avoid disorder and strife.¹²⁸

These groups in which Spener advocates verse by verse study was at the heart of the Pietist movement and at the heart of the beginnings of the Covenant Church. Conventicles, originally outlawed by Sweden, were the small study groups that Spener proposed as the *collegia pietatis*. These conventicles thrived among the Pietists in Sweden and the concept of the small group was carried into America by these Swedish Pietists. The early Covenanters even looked at the organizational meeting, where the Swedish Evangelical Mission Church was formed, as one of these conventicles where they studied the Word of God in relation to the formation of a new church. Glenn Anderson writes in his introduction to the Official Minutes of the Organizational Meeting, 1885:

The format of the organizational meeting in Chicago was not unlike that of a typical ‘mission meeting,’ so common among those early Mission Friends. Here were believers gathered to hear the Word of God preached. Then a discussion of its implications for their lives ensued, in which they sought biblical guidance regarding the possibility of organizing their movement.¹²⁹

While the early Covenanters adhered to the Creeds of Christendom such as the Nicene and Apostle’s Creeds, and the Augsburg Confession, they held to the highest regard Scripture. Man made creeds could not, and did not replace what God had inspired through His prophets. David Nyvall, the first president of North Park Seminary, wrote in a 1929 essay:

Besides offering the only workable formula for an all-inclusive unity of believers, the New Testament way is the only unassailable position of defense... Without being a confession, and just because of that fact, the New Testament excels all written confessions by the number of truths expresses

¹²⁸ Ibid., 89.

¹²⁹ Anderson, 6.

and implied, by the absence of errors, and by the fact that whatever truth it has in common with any confession is more simply and more clearly expressed in the New Testament.¹³⁰

Theodore W. Anderson echoed this supremacy of Scripture in his 1935 essay “Covenant Principles.” He wrote:

The supremacy of the Bible is a cornerstone in the structure founded by our spiritual fathers. The question constantly raised in pioneer days was, What do the Scriptures say? There may have been a tinge of ridicule in the epithet läsare, or ‘reader’, sometimes translated “readerists.” But the title was abundantly deserved. To our trailblazers, the Bible was the Supreme Court from which there could be no appeal.¹³¹

Anderson is correct in equating the Bible with the Supreme Court of the United States. From the beginning of the Pietist movement, Scripture, and the reading of, was of primary importance, from which there was no appeal. The earliest saying of the Pietists in Sweden and carried to America was ‘Where is it written?’ But this attitude towards the authority and inerrancy of Scripture comes from Spener’s writings including *The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scripture in 1694*:

The Holy Scripture places before us the most weighty of truths which have the greatest seriousness; it is thus easy to see that reading the Holy Scripture demands the greatest of care...Therefore, His Word, which expresses His will, is always the same and thus is to be directed to each person.¹³²

Further in this essay by Spener, he refers to Arndt’s True Christianity Book 1, Chapter 6 entitled *God’s Word Must Demonstrate its Power in Man Through Faith and Become Living*, where Arndt says that the New Testament is an external witness to what must occur within all men. Man must internalize the Scriptures for a change to be affected.

¹³⁰ David Nyvall, “Covenant Ideals,” in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*. ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 157-158.

¹³¹ Theodore W. Anderson, “Covenant Principles,” in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*. ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press 1999), 170.

¹³² Philipp Jakob Spener, “The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures,” in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 74.

There is a clear connection between the Evangelical Covenant Church's first Affirmation and the first Proposal by Spener. Both hold Scripture to the highest authority; both affirm the necessity of regular independent reading, and both, as seen in the Organizational meeting, see Scripture as the only perfect rule (and Guide) for faith and conduct. The Early Pietists saw the need for careful study of Scripture as did the early Covenanters. Their small groups, which Spener called *collegia pietatis* and the Mission Friends called conventicles, were formed for the express purpose of the careful, deliberate study of God's Word. The writings of the founding fathers of the denomination reflect the need of His Word in daily life and the need for His Word to guide in all circumstances.

The Necessity of New Birth

The Covenant Affirmation dealing with the necessity of new birth cannot be directly attributed to a specific Proposal of Spener; but there is a direct linkage to what Spener and other Pietists wrote in other works. First a look at the Covenant's view:

When the Covenant Church affirms that it is evangelical, it proclaims that the new birth in Jesus Christ is essential. We teach that 'by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God conquered sin, death, and the devil, offering forgiveness for sin and assuring eternal life for those who follow Christ.' New birth is more than the experience of forgiveness and acceptance. It is regeneration and the gift of eternal life. This life has the qualities of love and righteousness as well as joy and peace.^{133,134}

Having seen the problems with a state church, these early Covenanters knew that for a church to succeed it must be made up of a community of believers who experienced a new birth, a true conversion, and have accepted Jesus as their only Lord and Savior. Otto Högfeldt who was the editor of the *Missions-Vänner*, a Swedish newspaper, and a Covenant pastor himself,

¹³³ *Covenant Affirmations*, 9.

¹³⁴ The quote is from the Covenant's leaders guide to the Discipleship/Confirmation program that is called *The Journey*. This material is published by Covenant Press.

wrote a series of articles in the paper explaining what the Covenant held to. In this series published in 1917, Högfeldt wrote about a personal relationship with Christ. He maintains that this is the basis for preaching, personal life and church life. In the second of the articles Högfeldt, conservatively writes:

To our original principles, in the second place, belonged a sharp delineation of the borders between the righteous and the unrighteous, between those who had been born again and those who had not, between light and darkness, life and spiritual death. Any middle ground was not acknowledged. Camping between the boundaries was not allowed.¹³⁵

Högfeldt's strong wording points to how the early Covenanters believed in the necessity of new birth.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Covenant Church in 1935, their president, Theodore W. Anderson wrote an essay about the principals to which the Covenant holds in *Covenant Memories 1885-1935*. Anderson wrote about the Covenant Principles; those ideas to which the Covenant holds. Anderson was the first American born president of the denomination in its history, noted that after only twenty five years, the predominant language had switched from Swedish to English. He does maintain that the foundations of the Covenant are extant at this anniversary. In regards to new life, Anderson writes:

...it is more than an outward reformation. Giving the prodigal son a more honorable vocation is not sufficient. He must be restored to his father. A personal and vital relationship to Christ as the Savior is the clamant need. This means to know and love and trust and obey him. That is the heart of the Christian life. It is a sunny reality that puts a new halo on every activity. The Bible describes it as a new birth, a new creation, a resurrection from the dead. It is a partaking of the divine nature.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Otto Högfeldt, "Our Original Principles," in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 89.

¹³⁶ Theodore W. Anderson, "Covenant Principles," in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*. ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 171-172.

As time and theological philosophy changed, the Covenant's Affirmation regarding new birth did not. Nils Heiner wrote a series of articles in the Covenant Weekly in 1942. Heiner who was schooled both in Sweden and at North Park was familiar with Søren Kierkegaard before the rest of the world was able to read his translated works. In this series of articles, Kierkegaard's influence is seen in as Heiner accentuates the subjective truths in a relationship with Christ. In this series of articles in 1942 Heiner writes about the three defining attributes of the Covenant as seen in the name of the denomination; Evangelical Mission Covenant. Using each word of the name as a springboard for his exposition, Heiner focuses on the Gospel in the first of the series. "The Covenant is a gospel movement...accentuates personal experience. The objective truths must become subjective."¹³⁷ Heiner writes that there are two truths that are present in Christianity. The first are the objective truths, those truths that can be intellectually learned such as redemptive history; it is historical and can be seen through objective eyes. The second set of truths is those that are subjective; those truths that are internalized.

Instead of a system of truth explaining Christ and his work and thereby enriching the intellect, Christ has been received in the soul and has become incarnated in the believer, who has become a new creature in Christ. Truth operates in his life and transforms character. The whole mental life is also changed, and man experiences a new power...The old has passed away. Everything has become new.

This is the subjective principle in Christianity, and it is very fundamental. God gives; man accepts – these two principles must operate coordinately in man's salvation. This principle is fundamental in the Covenant.¹³⁸

Heiner maintains that this is a personal Christianity writing; "A personal Christianity cannot be lukewarm."¹³⁹ and argues that the difference between those who have this personal faith

¹³⁷ Nils Heiner, "Covenant Characteristics: Typical Spiritual Movements and Principles in the History of the Evangelical Mission Covenant," in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmation*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 179.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

and those who do not know the Lord is that there is attention to the future in those with a personal faith, and this attention to the future effects his whole life.

By 1948 the Evangelical Mission Covenant Church began to publish short pamphlets briefly describing the Covenant Principles of the Church. In the 1948 edition the second principle read:

We believe in a personal and vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion and sanctification. It is possible to have an intellectual conception of the fundamental facts of the Word of God and not yet be born again. It is also possible to have a good confession and yet be spiritually dead.¹⁴⁰

The influence of Nils Heiner can be seen in the wording of this statement. By 1960 there was a new name for the denomination but the principles stayed the same.

Membership in a Covenant Church is granted to those who through faith in God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have been born again to a living hope, who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God, and who are committed to living a Christian life.¹⁴¹

The 1973 Covenant Principles has the same wording as the 1960 edition and in 1976 the first expanded set of Affirmations is published with the second Affirmation reading in part:

The necessity of the new birth. When the Covenant Church affirms that it is evangelical, it proclaims that the new birth in Christ is necessary for a right relationship with God.

When the 2006 version of the Affirmations was released, the wording of the Affirmation was kept intact.

As can be seen through the history of the Covenant Church, there is a consistency of thought regarding the necessity of new birth. While Spener in his Proposals does not explicitly state this as one, there is a consistency within the writings of Spener that justify the

¹³⁹ Ibid., 181.

¹⁴⁰ *Covenant Principles* (Chicago: Covenant Press. 1948).

¹⁴¹ *Covenant Principles* (Chicago: Covenant Press. 1960).

connection. K. James Stein in his book *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* wrote: “For Spener, the new birth was an absolute necessity. It was the requisite piece of the divine means of our salvation.”¹⁴² One has to remember the purpose of the writing of the *Pia Desideria*. It was to be the Preface for Johann Arndt’s book *True Christianity*. Discouraged with the condition of the Church less than one hundred years after the Reformation, Arndt wrote what was to become a major work and the genesis of the Pietist movement. In Book I, Chapter 3 Arndt writes:

The new birth is a work of God the Holy Spirit, by which a man is made a child of grace and blessedness from a child of wrath and damnation, and from a sinner a righteous man through faith, word and sacrament by which our heart, thoughts, mind understanding, will, and affections are made holy renewed, and enlightened as a new creature in and according to Jesus Christ...

There is a twofold birth of a Christian man: the carnal, sinful, damnable, and accursed birth that comes from Adam, by which the seeds of the serpent, the image of Satan, and the earthly bestial quality of man is continued, and a spiritual, holy, blessed, gracious, new birth that comes out of Christ, by which the seed of God and the heavenly, godly man is perpetuated in a spiritual manner.¹⁴³

In the above passage Arndt is relying heavily on Martin Luther. In Luther’s Commentary of Galatians, he wrote:

Now, a new creature, whereby the image of God is renewed is not made or helped by any law or works, but by Christ, by whom it is created after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness.¹⁴⁴

An argument can be made that the second Affirmation of the Evangelical Covenant Church can be seen as being brought out of Spener’s thoughts on the spiritual priesthood. Spener not only wrote about this priesthood in the *Pia Desideria*, but in an essay in which he has seventy questions and answers about the spiritual priesthood. In Question 5:

¹⁴² James K. Stein, *Philipp, Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch*, (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986), 188.

¹⁴³ Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, Peter C. Erb ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 37.

¹⁴⁴ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, ed. John Prince Fallowes (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1979), 380.

How do Christians become priests?

As in the Old Testament priests were not elected, but were born to the office. So also the new birth in Baptism gives us the divine adoption as sons of the spiritual priesthood connected with it (James 1:18).¹⁴⁵

Spener equates the new birth with that of the adoption into the family of spiritual priests. In Question 36 Spener then makes the point that only the “pious Christians” (I read this as born again in light of 1 Cor. 2:14 and that the Holy Spirit dwells in those born again) receive special understanding of the Holy Scriptures so that they are then able to discern and glean every bit of wisdom from Scripture. To the question, “How does a Christian understand the Scriptures?” Spener answers: “From the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration the Scriptures were first recorded, so that they cannot be understood without his light.”¹⁴⁶

Spener’s whole concept of the spiritual priesthood was not new to him, but had been forgotten ideal of the Reformation. Luther had made the very same argument. Paul Althaus writes in his *The Theology of Martin Luther*:

Luther never understands the priesthood of all believers merely in the sense of the Christian's freedom to stand in a direct relationship to God without a human mediator. Rather he constantly emphasizes the Christian's evangelical authority to come before God on behalf of the brethren and also of the world. The universal priesthood expresses not religious individualism but its exact opposite, the reality of the congregation as a community.¹⁴⁷

Most of the Reformation theologians agreed with Luther on this subject. Timothy George states:

The priesthood of all believers was a cardinal principle of the Reformation of the 16th-century. It was used by the reformers to buttress an evangelical

¹⁴⁵ Philipp Jakob Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood,” in *Pietists Selected Writings*. ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 51.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴⁷ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 314.

understanding of the church over against the clericalism and sacerdotalism of medieval Catholicism.¹⁴⁸

But there was always the need for this spiritual priesthood to come out of a new birth on Christ.

While the assumption made above that there is direct correlation between the necessity of new birth and Spener's concept of the spiritual priesthood is tenuous, it can be further substantiated with his writing on *Resignation*. Per Spener, resignation is that state in a person's life when they give themselves over to God and allow God to work in them. In his essay, *Resignation*, Spener addresses the basis and the mode for resignation. He writes:

The basis and method of resignation: The basis of resignation is the great power of God himself and his might. The mode of resignation: It desires help; it places itself and its own will completely under the divine will; since it does not know clearly what to ask for, but it resigns itself simply to God.¹⁴⁹

As can be seen, this resignation that Spener writes about is that new birth; that moment when you acknowledge that there is more than your sinful life, ask for the forgiveness of your sins and ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. Spener also recognizes that this resignation, like new birth is not a self-generated salvation, but a gift from God, through the working of the Holy Spirit. The sinful man cannot know the need for a Savior unless the Spirit works within him. Compare Spener's resignation with Question 31 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Timothy George, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Quest for Theological Integrity," *Criswell Theological Review* 4, no. 1(Spring 1989): 289.

¹⁴⁹ Philip Jakob Spener, "Resignation: Lord, If You Will Make Me Pure," in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 84.

¹⁵⁰ *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 2001), 295.

Resignation then, as is new birth, is brought about by certain means, mindful that the Holy Spirit is the primary agent in this regard. Spener maintains that the means for resignation are the Word and the Sacraments. In reference to the sacraments, Spener writes: “In baptism the old man dies so that thereby we testify that we no longer live but that the Lord lives and that the new man is hereafter to live and work in us.”¹⁵¹

Using Spener’s concepts of the spiritual priesthood and resignation, we can see that there is an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and the new man. This re-birth, this new creation is what the Apostle Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone and the new has come!”

A Commitment to the Whole Mission of the Church

The Evangelical Covenant Church strongly believes in the Great Commandment (Mtt. 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Mtt. 28: 19-20) and takes these to be the basis for their third Affirmation. The mission of the Church is spreading the Gospel both here and abroad, caring for the sick and needy, and shelter to the poor and homeless.

Covenanters, like all Christians, are called to proclaim this good news with their lives and words, and by the love and integrity of their communities. In faithful witness, the lost are found in Christ. In acts of generosity and compassion, people are ministered to and justice is proclaimed. In the work of evangelism and mission, we seek to embody the presence of Jesus Christ with head, hands, voice, and heart.¹⁵²

From the beginning, the Covenant Church has participated in spreading the Gospel message and caring for those in need. At the first annual meeting of the Swedish Evangelical Covenant Church funds were raised to support missionaries in Alaska, then on to China and into Africa where the first Covenant missionary was martyred. The Covenant today is active

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁵² *Covenant Affirmations*, 12.

in twenty-seven countries around the world in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America. In regards to the Great Commandment, the Evangelical Covenant Church maintains two hospitals and a care center, elder-care facilities, enabling houses, and colleges.

The fact that the Covenant's involvement with the spreading of the Gospel cannot be in doubt, but the degree of involvement was recorded in an E.G. Hjerpe article published in the *Covenant Companion* in February 1924 which concerned the monies raised for mission work in 1923. Three hundred eighty one churches with a membership of 43,290, a total of \$88,641.51 was given to foreign missions and \$365,276.35 was given to home missions.¹⁵³ In 2003 funds, this would be close to one million dollars just for foreign mission. At the 2006 Annual Meeting a budget of \$5,162,000 was approved for foreign missions.¹⁵⁴ If your heart is where your treasure lies, then the heart of the Covenant is in mission work.

As mentioned, the Covenant's purpose in forming was for missions work. David Nyvall wrote in 1893, eight short years after the formation of the denomination, that:

It is only the great zeal for world and home missions, so characteristic of our people, that has brought local congregations to feel the need of union. Thus the Covenant is not a churchly organization in the ordinary sense of the word, but a voluntary union for common and general missionary purposes too great and extensive for the local congregations.¹⁵⁵

Nyvall's personal bias aside, the fact remains that missions, both foreign and home placed high on the list of contributing factors in the developing of this denomination. At the Covenant's fiftieth anniversary, Anderson wrote about the mission aspect of the Covenant Principles:

¹⁵³ E.G. Hjerpe, "The History and Principles of Our Denomination," in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 97.

¹⁵⁴ *Covenant Yearbook: Statistical Data & Resources for Churches*. (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2006), 397.

¹⁵⁵ David Nyvall, "Characterization of the Swedish Mission Covenant in Sweden and America." *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 143.

Finally, the urgency of the missionary task is inseparably attached to our spiritual heritage. Mission Friends, or friends of missions was the name applied to our fathers from the earliest days, and it was no misnomer. No narrow vision or limited perspective controlled them. They recalled that Christ declared that he was the light, not of Palestine, or Sweden or America only, but of the world. That the gospel of the grace of God is a universal message was a reality to them.¹⁵⁶

As the Covenant grew and began publishing its belief statements, missions work is consistently mentioned. In the 1948 Covenant Principles, the seventh Principle is “We Believe in the Missionary Task.” The content under this heading echoes what Anderson wrote in the above article. In 1960 and the 1973, it was found under the heading of “We Believe in the Evangelical Witness”:

In our missionary task at home and abroad, the basic purpose is to bring the Living Word to a dying generation, with such urgency and such commitment that those who hear the message will recognize the claim of Jesus Christ upon their lives and “crown Him Lord of all.”¹⁵⁷

The Evangelical Covenant Church lives out its’ belief in the Great Commandment through their benevolent institutions. Early in the life of this denomination there was an urgency to develop both hospitals and homes for those in need, today there are hospitals, enabling facilities, children’s homes retirement communities and family care facilities. “Rooted in The Evangelical Covenant Church, the hospital is dedicated to serving the physical, spiritual and psychological needs of our culturally diverse communities.”¹⁵⁸

The Covenant’s third Affirmation compared with Spener’s third Proposal, shows a consistency of thought. Spener’s third Proposal reads “it is by no means enough to have

¹⁵⁶ Theodore W. Anderson, “Covenant Principles,” in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 175.

¹⁵⁷ *Covenant Principles* (Chicago: Covenant Press), 1960.

¹⁵⁸ Swedish Covenant Hospital Mission Statement.

http://www.swedishcovenant.org/about/content.asp?id=a3010_4684_0_181750 (accessed July 9, 2007).

knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice”¹⁵⁹ and the Evangelical Church through their third Affirmation of *A Commitment to the Whole Mission of the Church*. Spener in his sermon *Christian Joy* on John 20:19-31 he emphasizes that the fruit of Christian joy is making men “eager and ready to do good.”¹⁶⁰ Elsewhere he wrote “All knowledge of God and His will according to the law and the gospel, however, does not exist in mere knowing but must come forth in praxis and action.”¹⁶¹

The Church as Fellowship of Believers

While a one to one correlation cannot be proved between the Covenant’s Fourth Affirmation there is a consistency of thought in Spener’s writings reveal his influence. First what must be established is what the Covenant means by the Church. For the principle on the fellowship of believers the Church points to two New Testament passages. The first is 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 where Paul describes the Church as a body consisting of interdependent parts “when all of God’s people are interacting with one another in worship and service, that God’s will is most clearly revealed and discerned.”¹⁶²

The second passage is Galatians 3:28 which stresses that all who are in Christ are equal in the Church.

The Covenant’s principle of being a fellowship of believers is both broad and narrow at the same time. In its narrowness, this principle is that “there is room only for believers in

¹⁵⁹ Philip Jakob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 95.

¹⁶⁰ Philipp Jakob Spener, “Christian Joy,” in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 95.

¹⁶¹ Philipp Jakob Spener, “The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures,” in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 73.

¹⁶² *Covenant Affirmations*, 14.

Jesus Christ.”¹⁶³ it is open to all believers. E.G. Hjerpe in his article in the February 1924

Covenant Companion wrote:

The Covenant’s policy in regard to church membership is that only believers shall belong to the church of God – that is, persons who have experienced new birth and know that they are children of God, and thus lead a Christian life.¹⁶⁴

One can see how this Affirmation and the second Affirmation are closely tied.

The Mission Friends (as the Covenant church was known before officially forming in 1885) held to this same principle. It is the common mission of the believers that make the church; to spread the Gospel and to live Christian lives. C.V. Bowman, who was the third president of the denomination, spoke in front of the Northwest Ministerial Association, and the transcripts of this speech were printed in the *Covenant Quarterly* in 1971. This speech was given in 1910, twenty five years after the formation of the denomination. In this he said:

But concerning church order, the Mission Friends have a principle that is still more unique and takes a very prominent place in their program. They hold that the local church shall consist of only believing members but at the same time have room for all true believers, no matter what their viewpoints are on controversial doctrines. It is this principle which really distinguishes Mission Friends from other Christian denominations, and which justifies their existence as a particular church.¹⁶⁵

The Covenant has been consistent in their membership requirements from the beginning. As seen in the above quotes there has always been the principle that church membership is based on one’s life in Christ. What makes the Covenant unique is the broadness of this principle? The basic requirement for membership is a new life in Christ, but beyond that the denomination is open to all who believe. There are no doctrines regarding baptism, eschatology, the charismatic gifts, or Creation days.

¹⁶³ E.G. Hjerpe, “The History and Principles of Our Denomination,” in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 97.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁶⁵ C.V. Bowman, “About the Principles of the Mission Friends,” in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmation*, ed Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 80.

The Evangelical Covenant Church is not a creedal church; one in which the creed is above all else. The Covenant maintains that Scripture is above all written documents of man, but that the historic creeds, particularly the Apostle's and the Nicene Creeds, are valuable:

The Evangelical Covenant Church adheres to the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation regarding the Bible. It confesses that the Holy Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. It affirms the historic confessions of the Christian Church, particularly the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, while emphasizing the sovereignty of the Word of God over all creedal interpretations.¹⁶⁶

The Covenant Church has consistently proved to be a fellowship of believers; however the influence of Spener's Proposals is a bit tenuous. There is not one Proposal that would be a direct match for this Covenant Affirmation, but the context of the Proposals, the *Pia Desideria*, and Spener's other writings provide a causal link.

In Part I of the *Pia Desideria*, Spener writes in the *Conspectus of Corrupt Conditions*, that he will address the members of the Christian church "who must seek their salvation with fear and trembling."¹⁶⁷ Further he writes that the Evangelical church, brought to light by Luther, is the true church. Therefore, since the "true church" is the church founded on the principles of Martin Luther, that members of this church are those who are saved by grace through faith, then the "true church" would consist solely of true believers. Spener continued Luther's battle against the "anti-Christian Babel"¹⁶⁸ and the state church concept of membership by nationality.

Spener, under the heading of "The Possibility of Better Conditions" (Part II), writes about Christian perfection vis-à-vis the early church. He averred that the modern church should strive towards this perfection about which Tertullian, Eusebius and Origin wrote; that

¹⁶⁶ Taken from the *Preamble of the Constitution of the Evangelical Covenant Church*.

¹⁶⁷ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 39.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

is, their Christian walk, how they conducted themselves in society. But, Spener writes that members must be tested:

On this account the early Christian were careful to examine and test the life of those who made application, and such persons were not admitted to the church until there was reason to believe that they would lead a life worthy of the calling to which they were called... Moreover, it recognized as brethren only those who lived according to its standards.¹⁶⁹

This perfection of life would reflect the heart; the new birth of the believer. With this it could then be posited that Spener was proposing a church (fellowship) of believers.

Returning to Spener's Proposal regarding the establishment of the spiritual priesthood, he expanded this thought in an essay titled *The Spiritual Priesthood*, in which he presents seventy questions and answers on this topic. Question 10 asks:

Who then are such spiritual priests?

All Christians without distinction (1 Pet. 2:9), old and young, male and female, bond and free (Gal. 3:28).¹⁷⁰

He then asks in question 50:

How does Baptism point to it?

Since by it we are united to Christ, and so all become members of one spiritual body, this communion also imposes the obligation that one member shall, according to his ability, further the best welfare of the other (1 Cor. 12:18, Eph. 4:15ff.).¹⁷¹ (emphasis of the author)

This demonstrate that the Church, is a fellowship of believers; one body of people who have put their faith in Christ alone as Savior.

As stated, there is no direct correlation between Spener's Proposals and the Covenant's Affirmation regarding the church being a fellowship of believers, but there is enough evidence to prove a strong relationship in thought and practice.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 83.

¹⁷⁰ Philipp Jakob Spener, "The Spiritual Priesthood," in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 51.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 60.

A Conscious Dependence on the Holy Spirit

This fifth Affirmation, like the fourth has no direct correlative Proposal, but there is sufficient proof to show that Spener's writing have influenced the development of this Affirmation. Spener makes the point that the Holy Spirit and God's Word are inseparable. We need the Spirit to understand Scripture, not necessarily the words on the page, but what God has intended for our benefit. In Spener's book *The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures*, Spener quotes Luther's thoughts on the necessity of the Spirit in understanding Scripture, he wrote:

One could indeed say that Scripture itself is a light and that there is no need for the Holy Spirit and its light. Indeed the Scripture is a light for our enlightenment but it is a word of the Spirit and if we could separate the Holy Spirit from the Word (which we cannot do), the Scripture would no longer work.¹⁷²

That the Holy Spirit and the reading and understanding of Scripture are inseparable cannot be questioned. From the moment that Christ ascended and the Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles, the Spirit and the Word went together. When Peter was preaching at Cornelius' house, the Spirit descended on all those who heard the gospel message (Acts 10:44).

Herman Bavinck wrote that "Apart for the Holy Spirit communion with God is impossible."¹⁷³ Throughout the New Testament, the work of the Holy Spirit is undeniable: the Holy Spirit is poured out on both men and women; the miraculous gifts of the Spirit – healing and prophecy, teaching and encouraging, for example – are liberally distributed throughout the early Church; and the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets (2 Tim. 3:16).

¹⁷² Philipp Jakob Spener, "The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures," in *Pietists Selected Writings* ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 72.

¹⁷³ Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 273.

He spoke through the prophets (2 Tim. 3:16), offers comfort, protects and gives men gifts. (Ex. 28:3, 1 Sam. 16:13).

As part of his education as a Lutheran minister, Spener understood the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is also a basic tenet of the Evangelical church.¹⁷⁴ His belief in the basic doctrines did not fade with his dissatisfaction with the conditions of the church; rather he held these basic tenets more dearly and strove to instill them through his writings: “If we, to whom God restored the bright light of the gospel through His servant Luther, fail our duty, God will get help elsewhere and preserve His honor.”¹⁷⁵ Spener clearly held Luther and his teachings in high esteem.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate man’s life is fundamental to the Covenant’s beliefs. Again the fifth Affirmation is: A Conscious Dependence on the Holy Spirit.

The Covenant understanding of the Holy Spirit, rooted in the New Testament, is further informed by the Reformation idea that word and Spirit are inseparable. It is the Spirit of God that enlivens the preaching of the gospel within the community of faith and grants efficacy to the sacraments participated in by the community of faith. The Covenant also draws upon its Pietist heritage for understanding the Holy Spirit. We believe it is the work of the Holy Spirit to instill in the human heart a desire to turn to Christ. We believe it is the work of the Holy Spirit to assure believers that Christ dwells within them. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in concert with our obedience, conforms us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-29).¹⁷⁶

The Holy Spirit is constantly at work. Donald Frisk writes in his book *Covenant*

Affirmations: This We Believe, that:

So basic and pervasive is the movement of the Spirit in the world and particularly among God’s people that Christian life and thought can only be understood as a response, however imperfect, to his active presence.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ See Luther’s Shorter Catechism, Part II, The Apostle’s Creed, Article 3.

¹⁷⁵ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 78.

¹⁷⁶ *Covenant Affirmations*. 2006,16.

¹⁷⁷ Donald C. Frisk, *Covenant Affirmations: This We Believe* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 2003), 107.

The Affirmation of a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit is so much part of Evangelical Christianity that it would no more make sense to remove this than to remove the authority of Scripture from the list of Affirmations. The work of the Holy Spirit is a concept that has not changed since the Reformation. As such, it is part of the Pietists, specifically Spener, and the Covenant Church. The inspiration for this Affirmation comes entirely from God's Word not specifically Spener, though he and other Pietists have actively spoke and written on the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Reality of Freedom in Christ

At the heart of the Evangelical Covenant Church is this last Affirmation. It has been said that the door to membership in the church is a mile wide but an inch deep. The width of this door comes from the reality of freedom in Christ. The denomination has been criticized for not having dogmatic doctrines in which the entire membership walk in lock step, but it is that freedom that allows for the diversity that the Covenant enjoys.

The early Mission Friends lived by two "catch phrases"; "How is your walk with the Lord today?" and "Where is it written?" It is the latter by which this freedom exists. The Covenant Committee on Freedom and Theology wrote in regard to the freedom that is found in Scripture through the diversity of interpretation:

However, the meaning of the Bible or the nature of its relevance is not so clear as to remove all diversities of interpretation. Christians do hold divergent views on the theological definition of such doctrines as biblical inspiration, the sacraments, the incarnation, the atonement, the application of the Christian ethic, and the consummation of the age. Thus, while there is unity on the level of faith in Christ and the Gospel there is diversity on the level of theological expression.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Covenant Committee on Freedom and Theology. *Biblical Authority and Christian Freedom* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1963), 10.

The commitment to the first five Affirmations is what allows for the freedom as described in the sixth. As noted above, the Covenant Church is not a creedal church, one that lives by a specific historic creed, but accepts these creeds as useful tools in the formulation of a theology. It is the unity of belief in the first five Affirmations, the essentials, that allows the diversity of thought on non-salvific issues. This theological freedom has existed since the beginning of the denomination. David Nyvall in 1893 wrote:

We have no special doctrine nor any accepted common creed in any form that binds us together. And yet there is to be found, in faith as well as preaching, an essential agreement in all the great questions. And I would want to dare the assertion that we are an orthodox people in an evangelical sense, which we also want to express in the word “evangelical” and include in our name. This does not exclude different views on many questions and even on important questions.¹⁷⁹

Nyvall restates that while the Covenant is orthodox in theology - adhering to the basic tenets of the faith as described by the historic creeds and confessions - the Covenant allows the freedom found in Christ to leave room for diversity on the minor issues.

The root, of course, to this theological freedom is Christ. It is through Him that true freedom is expressed, and found. Paul writes in Galatians 5:1 “It was for freedom that Christ set us free.” Jesus told the Jews “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32). But this freedom does come with responsibility. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.” (1 Cor. 8:9) and in 1 Timothy 6:4 Paul warns his protégé about an unhealthy interest in controversies and strife. The *Affirmations* state:

¹⁷⁹ David Nyvall, “Characterization of the Swedish Mission Covenant in Sweden and America,” in *Covenant Roots: Sources and Affirmations*, ed. Glenn P. Anderson (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1999), 140.

The Covenant Church has sought to honor the tensions inherent in this freedom. The Covenant Church has understood that God’s word is sovereign over every human interpretation of it – including its own. The Covenant freedom operates within the context set by other principles the Covenant Church regards as primary, particularly the authority of Scripture. Within these parameters the principle of freedom applies to doctrinal issues that might tend to divide.¹⁸⁰

This freedom in Christ, and the ability to discuss doctrinal issues openly and freely, does have its roots in the Pietist Philip Jakob Spener. His fourth Proposal acknowledges this freedom, but it serves as a warning to those who do involve themselves in these discussions. Spener’s fourth Proposal is “We must beware how we conduct ourselves in religious controversies.”¹⁸¹ While much of what Spener writes in this Proposal deals with how we are to deal with non-believers, the spirit of the Proposal applies to members of the Body also. He writes:

Nevertheless, I adhere to the splendidly demonstrated assertion of our sainted Arndt in his True Christianity, ‘Purity of doctrine and of the Word of God is maintained not only by disputation and writing many books but also by true repentance and holiness of life.’¹⁸²

Spener, in agreeing with Arndt, sees the value of diversity in thought; for it is through this diversity and disputation that right doctrine can be discerned. It is through wrangling with God’s Word that we can mine the true gold that is found in it, refined by debate with hearts that are anchored in Christ.

There was no argument with the Lutheran Church on most theological topics. Spener rather sought to unify the Church along with his Pietist thought. Philip Schaff noted in his *History of the Christian Church*:

The Lutheran Church, as the very name indicates, has the stamp of Luther indelibly impressed upon it; although the milder and more liberal

¹⁸⁰ Covenant Affirmations, 19.

¹⁸¹ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 99.

¹⁸² Ibid, 100.

Malanchthonian tendency has in all progressive and unionistic movement as those of Calixtus, of Spener, and of the moderate Lutheran schools of our age.¹⁸³

Spener's theology fell squarely in Lutheran thought, and he decried any attempt to divide the Church over the minutia of theological discussion.

Spener also sees that God's Word may speak to people differently at different times. These differences can and do form the kernel for discussion and disputation. He writes in *The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures*:

It must be added further that because the Holy Scripture is a book which is not directed to a particular time but to all times and not a particular person but to all men, one ought not read in it other than insofar as possible to direct it continually to the reader himself and to attend in it how God speaks not only generally or only to those whom the words were immediately directed, but to each person who reads the words.¹⁸⁴

Spener saw the Scriptures as that which should be read by all people every opportunity that they have, alone and in groups. In his essay "The Spiritual Priesthood," Spener writes in Question 54 that "When godly hearts come together and read the Scriptures with one another, each one should modestly and in love tell for the edification of the others what God has enabled him to understand in the Scriptures, and what he thinks will be serviceable for the edification of others."¹⁸⁵

While one can argue that the correlation between the Covenant's Affirmation on the reality of freedom in Christ and Spener's fifth Proposal may be tenuous, there cannot be any disagreement in the right use of Scripture as the final authority in all disputes. How we handle these disputes within the church can be directed though God's Word, and through

¹⁸³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 8:11.

¹⁸⁴ Philipp Jakob Spener, "The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures," in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 75.

¹⁸⁵ Philipp Jakob Spener, "The Spiritual Priesthood," in *Pietists Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 61.

love as a brother in Christ. Both of these conditions are hallmarks of the Pietist movement and the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Conclusion

From the above study, the progression of thought from the early Pietists through the 2006 version of the Covenant Affirmations remains consistent. Those things that the Covenant Church hold dear are the same as what Arndt, Spener, Francke and Zinzendorf wrote about: new birth in Christ, the authority of Scriptures, the whole mission of the Church (praxis), the church being a fellowship of believers, a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit and the reality of freedom in Christ.

This thesis has argued for a direct correlation between some of the Affirmations and Spener's Proposals, while others required additional sources to prove the point. Directly, it has been shown that the Covenant's first Affirmation squarely confirms Spener's first Proposal; the authority of Scripture. The Covenant Affirmation states "The centrality of the Word of God." Spener writes "Thought should be given to a more extensive use of the Word of God among us." Both argue that the Old and the New Testament have value for "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16

The Covenant's third Affirmation and Spener's third Proposal are also in direct correlation. The Covenant Affirmation reads "A commitment to the whole mission of the church." Spener reads "It is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice." Without a doubt, the Pietists and the Church share a mission that falls under the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The

outcome of this emphasis is the Covenant Church's institutions of benevolence and its involvement in world missions.

The next two Affirmations required more of Spener's writings in conjunction with his Proposals to adequately demonstrate correlation. The first of these was the Covenant's second Affirmation "the necessity of new birth." Spener's Proposal regarding "the establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood" and the frame of reference where he was schooled, leads one to conclude that Spener did recognize, as did the Reformers before him, that new birth was and is the only way of salvation. Spener was influenced by Luther and Arndt, both of which call for new birth in a Christian's life. I maintain that when Spener is speaking of a Christian, he is only referring to those who have experienced this new birth, especially when addressing Evangelical Christians.

The other Affirmation that required more proof was "the Church as a fellowship of believers," which matched up with fourth Proposal regarding the spiritual priesthood. Comparing this Proposal and his essay [on the spiritual priesthood], there can be no doubt that Spener believed that all Christians are priests and that they belong to the Church, and it is only those who are Christians that can be members of a Church.

The last two Affirmations required deep reading into Spener and other Pietists to prove the correlation. In the fifth Affirmation, "A conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit." There is no direct Proposal that correlates with this Affirmation. Rather, there is sufficient proof of Spener's dependence on the Holy Spirit through his writings. He separately links the Holy Spirit with God's Word, as the two cannot be without the other. This is borne out in his essay on *The Necessary and Useful Reading of the Holy Scriptures*, and through his teachings.

The last of the Affirmations, like the fifth, does not have a direct correlation with a Proposal. However, there is a strong connection with the Covenant's "the reality of freedom in Christ" and Spener's fourth Proposal regarding the conduct in "religious controversies." While Spener was primarily addressing this right conduct with non-believers, there is sufficient proof through this Proposal and other writings that this applies to members of the Body also. The Covenant Church, like Spener, holds Scripture to the final authority on all matters.

The direct link between Spener's Proposals and the Covenant Affirmations can be made to some extent. However, when the entire *Pia Desideria* and his other writings are considered, Spener's influence on the Mission Friends and the Evangelical Covenant Church is clear and considerable. Spener's influence on the Covenant goes well beyond these six Affirmations. The conventicles, which were borne out of his *collegia pietatis* for the study of Scripture and prayer, were deeply influential. His desire to see the Christian faith put into action, which was championed by Francke, has taken root in the Covenant's Ministries of Benevolence. And, if we examine Spener's other Proposals, we can see how important Spener thought schools and universities were to teach ministers of the Word. This can be seen in the Covenant's commitment to their seminary, and how early in the formation of the denomination this seminary drew the interest of its members.

The Evangelical Covenant Church's Affirmations positively reflect the intent and spirit of Spener's Proposals. However there are some areas in which, while following this thought, cause an apparent disunity within the denomination. The sixth Affirmation, the reality of freedom in Christ, and Spener's belief regarding religious controversies, seem to have the appearance that if you can find some proof text in Scripture, then your view is valid.

What this can cause is division within a church, or an appearance of not believing in anything solid or concrete. Many denominations rely on certain confessions or creeds to give boundaries to that denomination, the Covenant holds that these confessions and creeds are useful but are not prescriptive to the denomination. This gives the denomination the appearance of a “wall-less” framework on which to build.

This also gives the denomination its’ diversity in worship. One can enter into a variety of worship styles within the denomination. The range of worship is from traditional liturgy with the pastor wearing a robe singing Swedish hymns, to an African American congregation that offers a “hip-hop” service, and all styles, formats and languages in between, which could be disconcerting to someone who is looking for a more uniform denomination.

The totality of Spener’s influence on the Evangelical Covenant Church is immeasurable. The six Affirmations are just one of the tangible evidences of his influence and the *Pia Desideria* has become a work that not only was relevant to his time and circumstances, but continues to influence generations of people who are anxious to see God’s kingdom fulfilled on this earth. The subtitle for this work expresses Spener’s thought and that of the Covent Church and the Church as a whole:

Pia Desideria: Heartfelt Desire for a God-Pleasing Reform of the True Evangelical Church, Together With Several Simple Christian Proposals Looking Toward This End.

Amen. Let it be so.

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Addendum

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The Evangelical Covenant Church is a pilgrim church. Until Christ comes, we worship, serve, and witness so that the whole earth may hear God's voice, learn of God's love, and experience God's joy. If you want to learn more about the Evangelical Covenant Church's beliefs, click here for the longer PDF version of Covenant Affirmations or visit covchurch.org. For our Christian faith to be vibrant, it has to speak to our culture. That's true even—or especially—on complex and difficult issues of contemporary life. To read more, click here for Covenant Resolutions. The Evangelical Covenant Church maintains ties with the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (formerly known as the Svenska Missionsförbundet; see Svenska Missionskyrkan[18] and CIPE),[19] and the other churches in the International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches. In the 1920s, Warner Sallman created illustrations for the denominational magazine, Covenant Companion, including his charcoal sketch The Son of Man for a 1924 magazine cover that was later redone as the famous oil painting The Head of Christ. Since 1976, the denomination has ordained and licensed women as ministers.[20]. The documents affirm that the church is universal and national, understood in the Russian Orthodox statement as national autocephaly within ecumenical Orthodoxy. The Evangelical statement, on the other hand, focuses on the church's mission within a community of nation states. Freedom of conscience occupies a central place in the Evangelical social statement. It is placed at the top of the statement's agenda, just under theological presuppositions, and it is discussed well over a dozen times throughout the 72-page document. "At the basis of the church's mission lies the firm conviction that freedom of conscience should be guaranteed to all people," the statement opens.